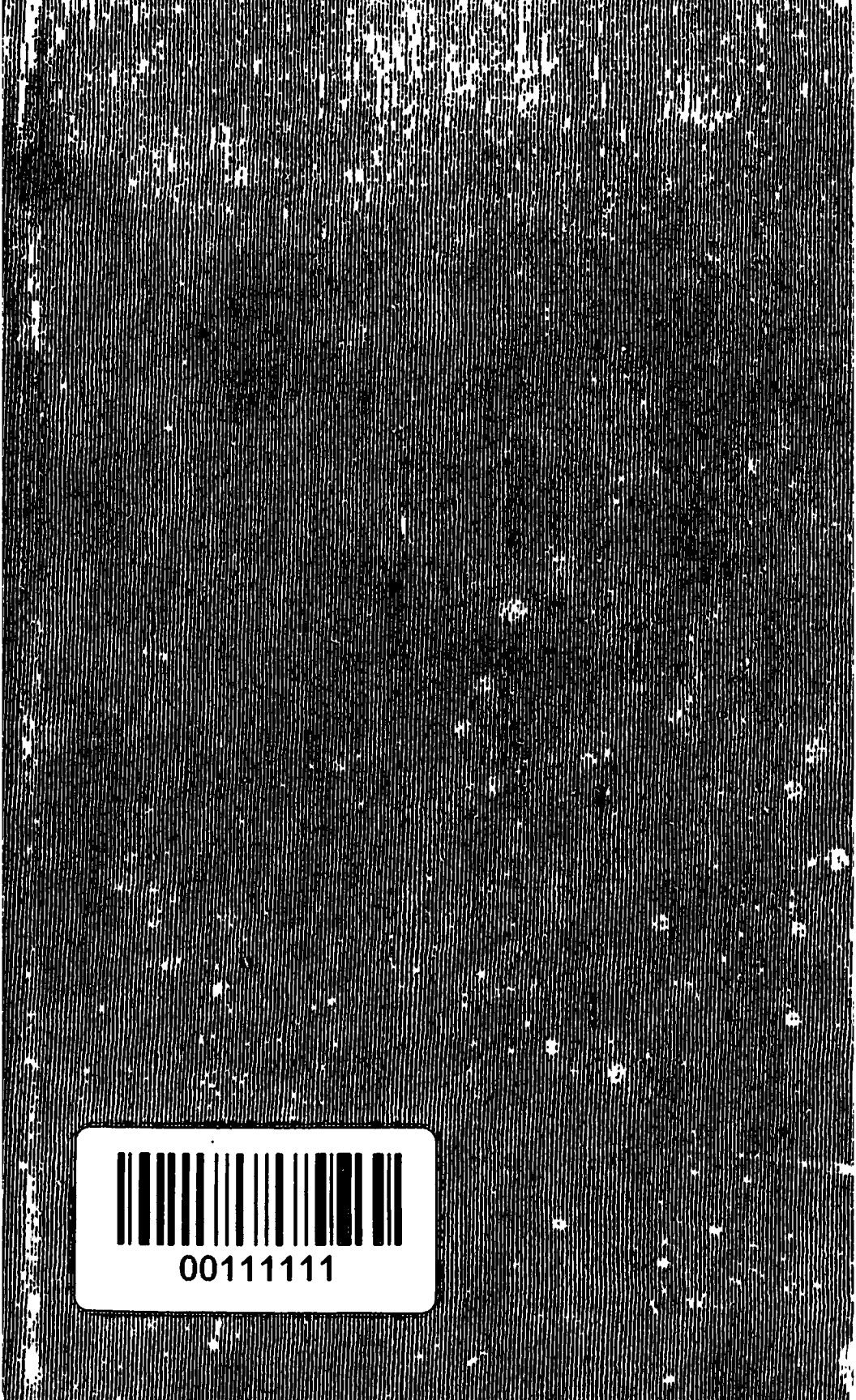
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THE
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THE

ARGUMENTS

OF THE

BOOKS AND CHAPTERS

OF THE

OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT,

WITH PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS.

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WRITTEN ORIGINALLY IN FRENCH,

BY THE REVEREND MR. OSTERVALD,

PROFESSOR OF DIVINITY, AND ONE OF THE MINISTERS OF THE CHURCH AT NEUFCHATEL, IN SWISSERLAND:

AND BY HIM PRESENTED TO THE

SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE.

TRANSLATED BY

JOHN CHAMBERLAYNE, ESQ.

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THE

SONG

OF

SOLOMON.

ARGUMENT.

The Author of the Song of Songs is Solomon. *What we read in this Book, taken literally, ſeems to be a deſcription of the love which* Solomon *and his queen had for each other. But this Song muſt be underſtood in a ſpiritual and myſtical ſenſe; and ſo indeed have all the ancient doctors, both* Jews *and Chriſtians, underſtood it. In this Book is repreſented, in figurative and allegorical expreſſions, the mutual love of Chriſt and his Church, which is called in Scripture his ſpouſe, and the ſentiments which this love produces in the hearts of all true believers: In this light we muſt conſider what is contained in this Book.*

THE

BOOK

OF THE PROPHET

ISAIAH.

ARGUMENT.

The prophet Iſaiah *lived about* 800 *years before the coming of our Saviour; and propheſied about ſixty years in the kingdom of* Judea. *There is great ſtrength and majeſty in his exhortations, in his reproofs, and in his threatnings. In this Book there are ſeveral predictions relating to the* Jews, *and other neighbouring nations; and it is to be obſerved, that of all the prophets,* Iſaiah *has ſpoke the moſt clearly of* Jeſus Chriſt, *of his ſufferings, of his kingdom, and of the calling of the* Gentiles.

CHAP. I.

I. *ISAIAH* reproaches the *Jews* for their ingratitude, and extreme corruption, which would ſhortly occaſion their utter ruin. II. He reproves them for their hypocriſy, and vain confidence in ſacrifices and external worſhip. III. He exhorts them to repentance, and declares, that if they would be converted, God would pardon and bleſs them; but if they continued in their diſobedience, they would be deſtroyed. Laſtly, He complains of the corruption of the city of *Jeruſalem*; and particularly, that the magiſ-

magiſtrates and rulers were given to injuſtice; and declares, that God would ſoon take vengeance on them for all theſe ſins; and that the *Jews* ſhould be deprived of all the privileges they enjoyed.

REFLECTIONS *after reading the chapter.*

WHEN we read the prophet's reproaches of the *Jews* for their ingratitude, we are led to conſider, that God, in admitting us into the boſom of his church, and adopting us for his children, has conferred greater favours on us than on his ancient people: and therefore we ſhall be infinitely more guilty, and expoſe ourſelves to more heavy chaſtiſements, if we ungratefully rebel againſt him. II. God declares in this chapter, that it is in vain to worſhip him in publick, and attend on him in the religious aſſemblies, and practiſe the moſt ſolemn acts of devotion, whilſt we live in ſin, and that God abhors ſuch worſhip. III. This chapter teaches us, that the only way to avoid the wrath of God, is to purify our hearts by repentance, to ceaſe from doing evil, and learn to do well; that God is always ready graciouſly to receive ſinners that are converted; but that the diſobedient and hardened ſhall periſh in their impenitency. IV. It muſt be obſerved, that *Iſaiah* particularly complained of the depravity of the judges and magiſtrates of *Jeruſalem*, ſaying, that they were companions of thieves, that they loved gifts, and followed after rewards. Theſe cenſures and the threatenings denounced againſt wicked magiſtrates, prove, that ſins committed by perſons of a publick character are uſually attended with a general corruption, and with the moſt ſevere judgments of God; and that, on the contrary, it is a great bleſſing on cities and ſtates, when God ſets over them juſt and upright rulers.

CHAP. II.

THE prophet forete in this chapter, I. That all nations ſhould be called to the knowledge and

ſervice of the true God. II. That God would reject the *Jews*, becauſe of their idolatry and other ſins. III. That he would deſtroy, by his almighty power, thoſe that ſet themſelves againſt him; and that he would aboliſh idolatry.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter contains three prophecies; the firſt of which foretold the calling of the Gentiles; the ſecond the rejection of the *Jews;* and the third the deſtruction of the wicked, who are the enemies of God. We ſee the completion of theſe prophecies. The ſeveral nations of the world have been called to the knowledge of the true God by the Goſpel, and are come into the church, and made partakers of the covenant of God; the *Jews* have been rejected, by reaſon of their ſins, and their incredulity; and God has in all times confounded the pride and power of the ungodly, and the enemies of his kingdom. The uſe then we ſhould make of reading this chapter is, to be very ſenſible of the great advantage we enjoy in being in the number of thoſe whom God has admitted into his church; and to expreſs our gratitude by a ſincere endeavour to know his will, by ſerving him with purity and zeal, and by walking in his way. We ſhould improve, by the example of the *Jews*, and by the judgments which are denounced againſt thoſe who oppoſe God, leſt by our rebellion we expoſe ourſelves to thoſe dreadful judgments, which he will pour upon the wicked, and on all thoſe who do not reverence his power.

CHAP. III.

ISAIAH fortels the utter deſtruction of the inhabitants of *Jeruſalem*, and of the kingdom of *Judah*; which, he ſays, would come upon them for their ſins; and chiefly for the injuſtice which the rulers of the people openly committed, and the luxury and immodeſty of the women of *Jeruſalem*.

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

THE prophet foretels in this chapter, that in thoſe troubleſome times the *Jewiſh* nation ſhould be extremely diminiſhed; but that God would reſtore the remnant of that people, ſanctify, and protect them.

REFLECTIONS *on chapters* iii. *and* iv.

THESE chapters teach us, I. That God withdraws his protection from nations that provoke him by their ſins; and that he puniſhes them, particularly, by ſetting over them rulers that know not how to govern well. II. That when men, inſtead of concealing their ſins, proclaim them openly, and, inſtead of being aſhamed of them, commit them without reſerve, there is reaſon to believe the judgments of God are not far off. III. That among the ſins which provoke the wrath of God, he is, above all, offended with the injuſtice committed by perſons of a publick character, and with luxury and pride. The deſcription is very remarkable which *Iſaiah* here gives of the luxury and vanity of the maidens and women of *Jeruſalem*, their various ornaments, their wanton attire, their immodeſty, their pride, their ſoft and diſſolute lives. We here ſee, that idleneſs and luxury were introduced into *Jeruſalem*, with other ſins; and the prophet expreſsly declares that this would be one cauſe of the ruin of the *Jews*, and of the miſeries that were going to fall upon them. This leaves no room to doubt but luxury is very odious in the ſight of God, and ſtill more odious in Chriſtians than in the *Jews*, and that when immodeſty, idleneſs, vanity, effeminacy, and a love of pleaſures generally prevail, they are a ſure mark of a great corruption, and forerunners of the divine judgments. Laſtly, God gives here tokens of his goodneſs, in promiſing that after the *Jews* had been chaſtiſed, he would reſtore and ſanctify them. This he did, when he delivered them from their enemies, who were ſhortly to attack them; when he re-

covered them from the *Babyloniſh* captivity; and chiefly, by ſending his Son into the world, to bleſs them, and to redeem them from their ſins.

CHAP. V.

I. *ISAIAH* repreſents, by the ſimilitude of a well cultivated but barren vine, the care God had taken of the *Jews*, the ingratitude of that people, and the judgments that were ſhortly to fall upon them. II. He particularizes the chief ſins of that nation, which were covetouſneſs, injuſtice, drunkenneſs, love of pleaſures, contempt of God's judgments, profaneneſs, and the iniquity of judges in taking bribes to corrupt them. III. The prophet foretels, that the *Jews* ſhould be puniſhed for all theſe ſins, and that diſtant nations, as the *Aſſyrians* and *Chaldeans*, ſhould come againſt *Jeruſalem*.

REFLECTIONS.

THE complaints which God makes of the ingratitude and diſobedience of the *Jews*, which he repreſents by the ſimilitude of a barren vine, plainly teach us, that God does all that is neceſſary for the good of men; that he makes uſe of the moſt proper means to engage them to love and fear him; that therefore he is not the author of their ruin; and that if they periſh, it is wholly owing to their own fault. This compariſon teaches us likewiſe, that when men abuſe the methods that God takes to render them happy, he deprives them of them, and forſakes them. Beſides this, it appears from this chapter, that there are ſome ſins which in a particular manner expoſe men to the divine vengeance; as covetouſneſs, and an immoderate deſire of riches; drunkenneſs, the love of mirth, feaſtings, and pleaſures; ſecurity, and a contempt of the divine threatenings, impious opinions and diſcourſes, and the injuſtice committed by judges and magiſtrates. The *Jews* were delivered into the hands of the *Chaldeans* for theſe ſins; and we may ſee by their example, that

when men give themſelves up to work wickedneſs, they are infallibly expoſed to God's wrath.

CHAP. VI.

THE prophet relates a viſion, in which God appeared to him in his glory, and commanded him to ſpeak to the *Jews* in his name, and to declare to them, that ſince their obſtinacy was paſt remedy, their cities ſhould be laid waſte; but that nevertheleſs their ruin ſhould not be paſt recovery.

REFLECTIONS.

THERE are two things in this chapter which chiefly demand our ſerious attention. I. The magnificent viſion which the prophet *Iſaiah* had, wherein he ſaw the Lord ſeated upon his throne, and ſurrounded by his holy angels, who celebrated his holineſs and infinite majeſty. By this remarkable viſion, which filled the prophet with fear and trembling, God deſigned to confirm him in his calling as a prophet, and prepare him to ſay and do whatever he ſhould command. The account given us of this viſion ſhould inſpire us with a great reverence and dread of the majeſty of God, and ſtir us up to praiſe and adore him continually with the angels, ſaying, with profound humility: *Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hoſts, the whole earth is full of his glory.* II. We muſt obſerve, that what is here ſaid of the blindneſs and obſtinacy of the *Jews*, is not to be underſtood as if God had blinded them, and hardened their hearts. God only informs the prophet what would be the ſucceſs of his miniſtry, and foretels that the *Jews* would harden themſelves wilfully. We ought never to attribute to God the ſin and obſtinacy of men, ſince he is ſo far from blinding and hardening them, that he does all that is neceſſary to enlighten them, to convert and ſave them: and if they continue in their ſins, and periſh in them, it is wholly owing to their own wickedneſs, and becauſe they would have it ſo.

CHAP. VII.

AHAZ, king of *Judah*, being attacked by *Rezin*, king of *Syria*, and *Pekah*, king of *Iſrael*, God ſends *Iſaiah* to him, to aſſure him that he would defend *Jeruſalem*, and that the kingdoms of *Syria* and *Iſrael* ſhould be ſoon deſtroyed. II. The prophet, to give *Ahaz* the ſtronger aſſurance that the kingdom of *Judah* ſhould not be delivered into the hands of the enemies that attacked him, foretels the extraordinary birth of a child. III. He declares, that the kingdom of *Iſrael* ſhould be ravaged by the *Egyptians*, and *Aſſyrians*.

REFLECTIONS.

THE care which God took to ſend *Iſaiah* to *Ahaz*, who was a wicked and idolatrous king, to promiſe him protection againſt the kings of *Syria* and *Iſrael*, who made war upon him, is an inſtance of the goodneſs of God towards men, even thoſe that offend him, and of his love to his people. *Iſaiah* exhorts *Ahaz* and his ſubjects not to fear thoſe two ſmoaking firebrands, as he in contempt calls the kings of *Syria* and *Iſrael*; and, in fact, theſe two kings, who intended to invade the kingdom of *Judah*, were themſelves deſtroyed ſoon after, with their kingdoms. There is, in this chapter, a remarkable prediction; the prophet ſays, that *within threeſcore and five years, Ephraim*, that is, the *Iſraelites* of the ten tribes, *ſhould be broken, that it be no more a people.* This came to paſs at the end of that term, when *Eſarhaddon*, king of *Aſſyria*, ſent ſtrangers to dwell in the land of *Iſrael*, in the room of the *Iſraelites*, who had remained there pretty numerous after *Salmaneſer*, king of *Aſſyria*, had deſtroyed the kingdon of the ten tribes. The behaviour of *Ahaz*, who rejected the promiſes and offers that *Iſaiah* made him from God, ſhews us, that if it be tempting God to expect what he has not promiſed, it is no leſs offending him not to believe his promiſes,

no

nor to receive the offers of his favour. However, we here find, that God, notwithſtanding *Ahaz*'s refuſal, told him by *Iſaiah*, that in a very ſhort time, and before a young ſon of that prophet had any knowledge, *Jeruſalem* ſhould be delivered from both the kings who made war againſt it. But what is moſt remarkable is, that *Iſaiah* then foretold that a virgin ſhould bring forth a ſon. This prophecy relates to *Jeſus Chriſt*, and is applied to him in the Goſpel, as he alone was born of a virgin; and to him alone can be aſcribed what *Iſaiah* ſaith of this extraordinary child, and the auguſt titles given him in this and the following chapters. Farther, as the Meſſiah, whoſe birth is here predicted, was to be of the family of king *David*, this prophey tended to aſſure the *Jews*, that God would not ſuffer that family, and the kingdom of *Judah*, who were then attacked, to be deſtroyed by their enemies.

CHAP. VIII.

I. *ISAIAH* continues to propheſy, that the attempts of the kings of *Syria* and *Iſrael* againſt *Jeruſalem* would be in vain; and that before a ſon which was born to him ſhould be of an age to underſtand, the *Aſſyrians* ſhould come againſt thoſe two kingdoms, and paſs on even to the kingdom of *Judah*. II. He exhorts the *Jews* to put their truſt in God, and fear none but him; to cleave to his word, and not to have recourſe to ſorcerers nor idols. He ſpeaks, laſtly, of the deſolation that ſhould at that time befal thoſe *Jews* which dwelt in *Galilee*.

REFLECTIONS.

THE repeated aſſurances which *Iſaiah* gave king *Ahaz* and the *Jews*, that they ſhould be delivered from the kings of *Syria* and *Iſrael*, ſhew, that God defeats the attempt which the enemies of his church form againſt it, and that he renders their contrivances vain and ineffectual; and therefore that in God alone

we

we ought to place our fear and our truſt. The event anſwered the prediction: *Tiglath-pileser*, king of the *Aſſyrians*, came to *Ahaz*'s aſſiſtance, took the city of *Damaſcus*, which was the capital of the kingdom of *Syria*, ſlew *Rezin* their king, and in him put an end to that kingdom. *Tiglath-pileſer* took alſo part of the kingdom of *Iſrael*, and carried the people captive into *Aſſyria*; but made *Ahaz* king of *Judah* tributary. Some time after, *Salmaneſer*, who ſucceeded *Tiglath-pileſer*, totally deſtroyed the kingdom of *Iſrael*; and at the end of eight years, *Sennacherib*, another king of *Aſſyria*, made war upon the kingdom of *Judah*, under the reign of *Hezekiah*, ſon of *Ahaz:* He even beſieged *Jeruſalem*, but in vain, ſince God protected and miraculouſly delivered that city. Thus all that *Iſaiah* had foretold was fulfilled. In the ſecond part of this chapter, the prophet very ſtrongly condemns thoſe, who, in the danger the *Jews* were then in, inſtead of applying to God and his word, had recourſe to ſorcerers, and to the dead. From whence it appears, that it is a great crime, and extreme impiety, to conſult ſorcerers, and thoſe who pretend to foretel things to come; and that thoſe who give credit to ſuch perſons, and make uſe of ſuch damnable methods, forſake God. This teaches us likewiſe, that we ought to have no other ſupport of our truſt, or rule of our faith, than God's word. Laſtly, It is to be obſerved, that if *Galilee*, where the tribes of *Zabulun* and *Nephtali* were ſituated, was the firſt that was laid waſte by the *Aſſyrians*, that country had afterwards the happineſs to be the firſt that was enlightened by the Goſpel; *Jeſus Chriſt*'s moſt uſual abode being in *Galilee*, as we are taught by St. *Matthew*, in the fourth chapter of his Goſpel, where he applies to the inhabitants of *Galilee* the laſt words of this, and the firſt words of the following chapter.

CHAP.

CHAP. IX.

THIS chapter has two parts. I. *Iſaiah* foretels, that God would deliver *Jeruſalem*, and the kingdom of *Judah*, and eſtabliſh an everlaſting kingdom in the family of *David*, by a ſon which ſhould be born to him. II. He propheſies, that the kingdom of *Iſrael* which at that time made war againſt that of *Judah*, ſhould be humbled by the *Syrians* and *Philiſtines*, and by the king of *Aſſyria*.

REFLECTIONS.

WE read in the beginning of this chapter, *the people that walked in darkneſs have ſeen a great light*; which words were fulfilled, not only in the deliverance which God formerly vouchſafed the *Jews*, when he defended them againſt their enemies, but chiefly in the favour granted to that people, and afterwards to other nations, in cauſing the light of his Goſpel to ſhine upon them, when they were in the darkneſs of ſin, and of death. This happy change was wrought by the coming of *Jeſus Chriſt* the Son of God, whoſe glory, divinity, and eternal kingdom, are here deſcribed in terms ſo clear and remarkable, and which can be applied to no other. II. We are next to obſerve what *Iſaiah* propheſied, that God would diſplay divers judgments upon the *Iſraelites*, by means of the *Syrians* and their other neighbours; and that becauſe they would not turn to him that ſmote them, but even ſoothed themſelves in their ſins, he would ſend them new and greater calamities, *and that his anger ſhould not be turned away, but his hand ſtill ſtretched out againſt them*. This teaches us, that God afflicts men to bring them to him; that when they harden themſelves, he doubles the ſtroke of his rod; and therefore, that the only way to turn away his wrath, is to profit by his chaſtiſements, to be converted, and humbled.

CHAP.

CHAP. X.

I. THIS chapter contains threatnings againſt thoſe who oppreſs others by violence and injuſtice; and particularly againſt the *Aſſyrians*, whom the prophet foretels God would make uſe of to puniſh the kingdom of *Iſrael;* and that they ſhould think to become maſters even of *Jeruſalem*, as they had conquered *Calno*, and ſome other cities here mentioned. But the prophet adds, that after they had executed the deſigns of the Almighty, he would puniſh them for their injuſtice and pride. II. He comforts the inhabitants of *Jeruſalem* againſt the fear of the king of *Aſſyria*, by promiſing them that God would redeem the remnant of his people.

REFLECTIONS.

WE may gather in general from this chapter, that violent proud, and unjuſt men, are threatened with the curſe of God. But what we are chiefly to obſerve here is, that God thought fit to make uſe of the king of *Aſſyria* to puniſh the *Iſraelites;* that this prince was to accompliſh the deſigns of God without knowing it; that he would boaſt of his ſucceſs, and even threaten to reduce *Jeruſalem*; but that afterwards God would deſtroy him, becauſe he had unjuſtly attacked the *Iſraelites*, and out of a principle of pride, and becauſe he had attributed his victories to his own wiſdom and ſtrength. In this chapter, which is very remarkable, we ſee plainly, that although God lets the wicked alone, and employs them to chaſtiſe men, and to execute his deſigns, he nevertheleſs puniſhes them juſtly for doing it; ſince their actions are voluntary and free, and the end they propoſe is only to gratify their own paſſions, and not to fulfil the deſigns of Providence. This ſhould teach us to adore the ways of God's providence, and to confeſs, that he preſides over all things, even over the criminal and unjuſt actions of the wicked; but that, however, he is by no means

means the author of the ſins which men commit; that he has a right to puniſh them, and that he will infallibly do it. Theſe conſiderations, which perfectly vindicate the ways of God's providence, teach us not to fear the power and malice of men, and to truſt always in him. *Iſaiah* ſays, in this chapter, *That a remnant of Iſrael ſhould return*; which deſcribes not only what happened to thoſe who were delivered from the king of *Aſſyria*, or from the *Babyloniſh* captivity, but this relates in general to thoſe *Jews* who were ſaved by believing in *Jeſus Chriſt*, while the reſt were rejected. This is St. *Paul*'s application of theſe words of *Iſaiah*, in the Epiſtle to the *Romans*: *Though the number of the children of Iſrael be as the ſand of the ſea, a remnant ſhall be ſaved.*

CHAP. XI.

I. THE prophet in this chapter foretels, that although the kingdom and family of *David* were to be brought low, and reduced to a very abject condition by their enemies; yet God would preſerve that family, and raiſe up a great king, and put his ſpirit upon him. II. He repreſents, in figurative expreſſions, the kingdom of the Meſſiah, under whom the whole earth ſhould be filled with the knowledge of the Lord. III. He promiſes, that God would again diſplay in behalf of his people, to recover them from the ſeveral countries where they ſhould be diſperſed, the ſame power which he had diſplayed when he brought them out of the land of *Egypt*.

REFLECTIONS.

WHAT is ſaid in this chapter may be applied to that which God did in behalf of the family of king *David* and of the *Jews*, under the reign of good king *Hezekiah*, when he preſerved them from the enemies which then attacked them; and when he afterwards brought back the remnant of that people from the ſeveral countries where they had been diſperſed. But the

the true ſenſe of the prophecy is, that the Meſſiah was to ſpring from the poſterity of *David:* that the ſpirit of God ſhould reſt upon him, with his moſt extraordinary gifts; that his kingdom was to be a ſpiritual and heavenly kingdom; and that the deſign of this kingdom would be to reconcile all men, to make them live in peace, and to fill the whole earth with the knowledge of the Lord. Theſe are ſo many ſigns which prove that *Jeſus* is the Meſſiah who was to come, theſe are powerful motives to engage us to ſubmit to his kingdom, to live in peace and unity, and, by leading a holy life, to acknowledge God's mercy to us, in giving us the knowledge of himſelf, and redeeming us by *Jeſus Chriſt.*

CHAP. XII.

IN this chapter the prophet adds a ſong of thankſgiving for the great ſalvation with which God was to viſit his people.

REFLECTIONS.

WE have in this chapter a pattern of the praiſes and thankſgivings which Chriſtians ought to render to God continually for that great deliverance which he has vouchſafed unto them, in redeeming them by his Son *Jeſus Chriſt.*

CHAP. XIII.

THE contents of the preceding chapters relate to the ſtate of the *Jews,* when they were attacked by their enemies, in the reign of *Ahaz,* and foretels what would befal them, as well as the kingdom of *Iſrael.* The thirteenth and following chapters contain prophecies againſt the nations and kingdoms who ſhould afflict the people of God. In this chapter he foretels, that the *Babylonians* would be ſubdued by the *Medes* and *Perſians.*

REFLECTIONS.

THIS general reflection is to be made on this and the following chapters to the twenty-fourth, and upon ſeveral other parts of this Book; that the predictions of *Iſaiah* did not only relate to the *Jews*, but that God commanded him likewiſe to propheſy againſt other nations, even the moſt powerful empires, ſuch as was at that time the *Babyloniſh*; and to commit his prophecies to writing. God was pleaſed thus to order it, for the inſtruction and conſolation of the *Jews*, and to convince all men, in ages to come, that he is the Almighty God, the Lord of kings and nations. This is a mark of majeſty and greatneſs, which ſhould be well obſerved in theſe prophecies; and is the more remarkable, as all the threatenings denounced therein againſt the ſeveral nations were put in execution. On this thirteenth chapter it muſt be obſerved, that as the *Babylonians* were to take *Jeruſalem*, burn the temple, and carry the people into captivity, God, to give the *Jews* a right ſenſe of this great event, and for their conſolation, was pleaſed to declare long beforehand, that the empire of the *Babylonians* ſhould be deſtroyed. This prediction is very wonderful: *Iſaiah* expreſly declares, that *Babylon* ſhould be taken at a time, and in a manner, which the *Babylonians* could not have foreſeen; that it ſhould be utterly deſtroyed, and never recover from its ruins, but become a retreat for wild beaſts. *Iſaiah* foretels this two hundred years before, when the *Babyloniſh* empire was in the moſt flouriſhing condition; at the end of which time *Babylon* was taken by the *Medes* and *Perſians*, as we learn from the fifth chapter of *Daniel*, and from profane hiſtory. This prophecy affords us the cleareſt conviction of the divine authority of the Sacred Writings; it proves, that God was the director of all theſe great events. We here remark the divine juſtice againſt the *Babylonians*, who had ſo unjuſtly oppreſſed the *Jews*; and, laſtly, we ſee that God graciouſly protects

protects his church. These predictions, which, when they were pronounced, had a natural tendency to comfort the *Jews*, should make still greater impression upon us, as they have been since so exactly fulfilled; and they furnish us with the most convincing proofs of the divinity of the prophecies contained in this Book.

CHAP. XVI.

I. *ISAIAH* foretels the deliverances and restoration of the *Jews*. II. He declares, that God would destroy the *Babylonians* by his power, for their pride and cruelty, though they trusted in their own strength. III. He threatens likewise the *Philistines* with total destruction.

REFLECTIONS.

THE promises which *Isaiah* made to the *Jews* shew, that if the prophets had a commission to threaten them, they were also sent to comfort them, with an assurance that God would be reconciled with them. Thus has God always given proofs of his goodness, at the same time that he has given tokens of his justice. *Isaiah*'s description of the insupportable pride of the *Babylonians*, of their formidable power, and the extent of their dominions, should lead us to consider, that how great soever the power of the kings of the earth, and the enemies of the church may be, it can never hold out against God; and that his justice is engaged to confound the proud and unjust. This should teach us humility and confidence in God; since pride is not less odious in private persons than in princes and nations. Again, the destruction of the city and empire of *Babylon* very evidently proves the truth and divinity of *Isaiah*'s prophecies. The prophet mentions one very remarkable circumstance; which is, that this great and pompous city should become pools of water, and a dwelling for wild beasts; which actually came to pass afterwards, as we are informed

formed by hiſtory. The deſtruction of the *Philiſtines*, the ancient enemies of God's people, preſents us with the ſame reflections; which came to paſs in the reign of *Hezekiah*, a few years after *Iſaiah* had propheſied againſt them.

CHAP. XV.

ISAIAH, in this and the following chapter, propheſies againſt the *Moabites*; foretels the taking of the principal cities, *Ar* and *Kir*, and others here mentioned; and declares that their country ſhould be reduced to the utmoſt extremity.

CHAP. XVI.

THE prophet in this chapter ſays, the *Moabites* ſhould ſend lambs, that is, a tribute to the king of *Jeruſalem*; that the *Iſraelites* ſhould dwell in their own land; and that all this ſhould happen to puniſh the pride and inſolence of the *Moabites*; and laſtly, he takes notice, that theſe threatenings ſhould be accompliſhed in three years.

REFLECTIONS *on chapters* XV. *and* XVI.

THE prophecy concerning the deſtruction of the *Moabites* was fulfilled at the exact time mentioned by *Iſaiah*, when *Salmaneſer*, king of *Aſſyria*, made war upon the *Iſraelites*. This prince took poſſeſſion of the kingdom of *Moab*, and the *Moabites* became afterwards tributaries to the kingdom of *Judah*, and did homage to *Hezekiah*, after the *Aſſyrians* had been defeated in that king's reign. All theſe events God was pleaſed to foretel, to convince the *Jews* of the truth of all that the prophets declared, and to teach them, that his providence ruled over all things. The ſame inſtructions we may receive from ſeveral other prophecies of the like nature. In the deſolation of the *Moabites* we ſhould likewiſe conſider the juſt puniſhment of their pride, and of the injuries they had

done to the *Jews*, and the care which God has, in all ages, been graciouſly pleaſed to take of his people.

CHAP. XVII.

THE prophet foretels of the ruin of *Damaſcus*, the capital of the kingdom of *Syria*, which is called the fortreſs of *Ephraim*: that is, the defence of the *Iſraelites* of the ten tribes, who had put themſelves under the protection of the king of *Syria*. He denounces the deſtruction of the ten tribes themſelves, becauſe they had forſaken the true God to ſerve idols.

REFLECTIONS.

IN the ſixteenth chapter of the Second Book of Kings, we read an account of the deſtruction of the kingdom of *Damaſcus*, foretold by *Iſaiah*. *Tiglath-pileſer*, king of the *Aſſyrians*, took that city, laid it waſte, carried the inhabitants into captivity, and put their king to death; and a few years after, the kingdom of *Iſrael*, having made a league with the *Aſſyrians* againſt the kingdom of *Judah*, was likewiſe ſubdued and totally extinguiſhed by the ſame *Aſſyrians*, who had conquered *Damaſcus*. By this means the *Syrians* and the *Iſraelites*, who had unjuſtly attacked the king of *Judah*, were puniſhed for their injuſtice, as *Iſaiah* had ſeveral times foretold; and the *Iſraelites* in particular received the puniſhment which their idolatry juſtly merited. Thus the divine juſtice, and the truth of *Iſaiah*'s predictions, appeared in the deſtruction of both theſe kingdoms.

CHAP. XVIII.

THIS chapter is attended with obſcurity, and it is difficult to ſay with certainty what is the preciſe meaning of it, by reaſon of the figurative expreſſions we meet with in it, which may be explained more ways than one; and becauſe hiſtory does not afford us ſufficient light on this ſubject. However, the moſt

probable

probable interpretation ſeems to be, that the king of *Ethiopia*, when he was going to march againſt the king of *Aſſyria*, who had attacked the *Jews*, would invite the *Egyptians* to join him; but that God would confound the deſigns of the *Aſſyrians*, and deliver *Jeruſalem* by his own power alone.

REFLECTIONS.

IN the nineteenth chapter of the Second Book of Kings, we find the two events which the prophet *Iſaiah* here takes notice of. One is, that *Tirhakah*, king of *Ethiopia*, came with his army againſt *Sennacherib*, king of *Aſſyria*, who at that time was beſieging *Jeruſalem*. The other is, that *Sennacherib*'s army was utterly deſtroyed by an angel; and that prince, returning to his own country, periſhed in a miſerable manner. God therefore himſelf, and not the king of *Ethiopia*, was the deliverer of *Jeruſalem*, and took vengeance on the *Aſſyrians*; wherein he diſplayed his infinite power, and his love for his people.

CHAP. XIX.

THIS chapter is a prophecy againſt the *Egyptians*, which foretels, I. Their confuſion and diſſention among themſelves, till a powerful king ſhould execute the judgments of God againſt them. II. He foretels, that *Egypt* ſhould come to the knowledge and worſhip of the true God.

REFLECTIONS.

HISTORY perfectly clears the predictions contained in this chapter. After the death of *Sethon*, king of *Egypt*, the *Egpytians* had twelve kings, who were at war together a long time; after which, all *Egypt* was under the dominion of one prince only, named *Pſammitichus*. The *Egyptians* were afterwards attacked by the king of *Aſſyria*, and by *Nebuchadnezzar*, who ſubdued them; and in ſome time *Egypt*,

Judah, and *Aſſyria*, were governed by the ſame monarch. At the end of this chapter *Iſaiah*, ſays, that the cities in the land of *Egypt* ſhould ſpeak the language of *Canaan*; that there ſhould be an altar to the Lord in that land, and that the *Egyptians* ſhould call upon God and do ſacrifice to him. This relates firſt, to what happened when the *Jews* retired into *Egypt*, after the deſtruction of *Jeruſalem*, and afterwards built a temple there, called the temple of *Onias*, which engaged many of the *Egyptians* to worſhip the true God. But this prophecy was not fully completed till the times of the Goſpel, when the *Egyptians* and other nations were converted, and by that means accounted the people of God as well as the *Iſraelites*.

CHAP. XX.

GOD commands *Iſaiah* to walk barefoot and naked, that is, without his robe, having on only his under garments; to ſignify, that in three years the *Egyptians* and the *Ethiopians* ſhould be led into captivity naked and barefoot, by the *Aſſyrians*; and that this ſhould convince the *Jews*, that they had done wrong to imagine that the king of *Egypt* ſhould deliver them from the king of *Aſſyria*.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS prophecy was verified when the king of *Aſſyria* carried his arms as far as *Egypt*, took ſeveral cities in it, and carried a great number of *Egyptians* captives into his own country. This muſt needs undeceive the *Jews*, who truſted on the *Egyptians*, and teach them to truſt in God only.

CHAP. XXI.

THIS chapter contains two predictions: The firſt is concerning the deſtruction of the *Babylonians*, who were to fall into the hands of the *Medes* and *Perſians*. The ſecond relates to the people of *Dumah* and

and the *Arabians* of *Kedar*, who were likewiſe to be expoſed to the utmoſt miſeries. The people of *Dumah* were of the poſterity of the *Iſhmaelites*.

REFLECTIONS.

IN this chapter *Iſaiah* foretels the taking of *Babylon* by the *Medes* and *Perſians*: He calls them to beſiege it and to conquer it; and expreſsly mentions their taking that city in a night, when the king of *Babylon* ſhould be feaſting, and taking his fill of pleaſures. Thus it actually came to paſs, as hiſtory informs us, and we read at the end of the fifth chapter of *Daniel*. This prophecy, which was pronounced ſo long beforehand, contains in it a moſt evident mark of majeſty and divinity. The *Edomites* and *Arabians*, who are here mentioned, were alſo invaded by the *Aſſyrians*. By which God was pleaſed to puniſh the idolatry of thoſe nations, and avenge the injuries they had done to the *Jews*.

CHAP. XXII.

AFTER the prophet had foretold, in the foregoing chapters, the deſtruction of thoſe idolatrous people who had oppreſſed the *Jews*, he denounces in this chapter the miſeries that would befal the *Jews* themſelves, notwithſtanding all the precautions taken by the inhabitants of *Jeruſalem* to ſecure them from their enemies; and he ſays, that this would come upon them, becauſe they had abandoned themſelves to diſſolute pleaſures, at a time when God called them to repentance. *Iſaiah* foretels likewiſe, that *Shebna*, one of king *Hezekiah*'s chief officers, when *Sennacherib* beſieged *Jeruſalem*, ſhould be removed from his place, and that *Eliakim* ſhould ſucceed him. What is here ſaid of *Shebna*, gives room to ſuppoſe, that this prophecy relates to what happened when the *Aſſyrians* came againſt *Jeruſalem*, and carried captive to *Babylon Manaſſeth*, the ſon of *Hezekiah*, as we read *2 Chron.* xxxiii. 11.

REFLEC-

REFLECTIONS.

THE threatenings which are here denounced againſt *Jeruſalem* by the prophet, after he had threatened the other nations, ſhew, that God ſpares not his own people, and thoſe who profeſs to ſerve him, when they offend him; and that the nations and cities, where impiety reigns, are at laſt expoſed to his vengeance, which nothing can ſecure them from. But what is chiefly to be obſerved here is, that one of the greateſt ſigns of hardneſs of heart, and that which moſt provokes God to puniſh men, is their being inſenſible of his judgments, and giving themſelves up to mirth and pleaſures, and diſſoluteneſs, at a time when he calls them to humiliation and repentance. *Iſaiah*'s prediction of *Shebna*'s being turned out, and *Eliakim*'s being preferred, proves, that what happens to private perſons is directed by Providence, as well as what befals princes and nations; and that God exalts and abaſes whom he pleaſes, as may beſt anſwer his wiſe deſigns.

CHAP. XXIII.

THIS chapter foretels the humbling of the *Tyrians*, who were neighbours to the *Jews*, and prided themſelves in their riches and power.

REFLECTIONS.

THE prediction contained in this chapter was fulfilled, when *Nebuchadnezzar*, after a tedious ſiege, took the city of *Tyre*. It is remarkable, that the prophet in this chapter, ſays expreſsly, that *Tyre* ſhould be deſolate ſeventy years; that at the end of that time it ſhould be reſtored: that its trade ſhould again flouriſh, and part of its riches be conſecrated to God. All theſe things happened to the city of *Tyre*: After it had fallen under the power of the *Babylonians*, it recovered from its ruins, became very conſiderable, and

and enjoyed its liberty in the time of *Alexander* the Great: After this the *Jews* reaped many advantages from the *Tyrians*, and at laſt, the Goſpel was preached in the land of *Tyre*. In all this, we ſee evident proofs of the divinity of theſe prophecies, and that Providence governs the world, and preſides over all events.

CHAP. XXIV.

THIS chapter treats of the extreme deſolation of *Judea*, occaſioned by the ſins of the *Jews*. *Iſaiah* promiſes, however, that *Jeruſalem*, ſhould be reſtored.

REFLECTIONS.

IN this chapter we find a prediction of the miſeries that threatened the *Jews*. *Iſaiah* declares, that their land would ſhortly be entirely deſolate, becauſe it had been profaned and defiled by the ſins of its inhabitants, and they had broken the divine covenant. By this we ſee what they have reaſon to expect, who imitate the *Jews* in their rebellion and ingratitude. God at length puts in execution againſt them the decrees of his juſtice, and overwhelms them with his judgments; but if he does not always puniſh the tranſgreſſors of his covenant and laws with temporal puniſhments, he will infallibly puniſh them in the life to come; ſince the threatenings of the Goſpel are not leſs expreſs, nor leſs certain, than thoſe of the ancient prophets. On the other hand, the promiſes God here makes, to eſtabliſh his kingdon, and again to manifeſt his glory at *Jeruſalem*, after he had afflicted it, expreſs God's mercy to his people. Theſe promiſes concern us, as well as the *Jews*, ſince we ſee their perfect completion in the manifeſtation of *Jeſus Chriſt*, and the eſtabliſhment of his kingdom.

CHAP. XXV.

THIS is a ſong of praiſe for the bleſſings which God would grant to his people, in delivering them, and humbling their enemies.

REFLEC-

REFLECTIONS.

THE praiſes and thankſgivings contained in this chapter relate, firſt, to the deliverance of the *Jews*, and their return from *Babylon*; but they chiefly ſuit that great deliverance, which the Meſſiah was one day to procure for men, by redeeming them, and purchaſing ſalvation for them. We are chiefly to obſerve, after St. *Paul* and St. *John*, that theſe words of the prophet, *He will ſwallow up death in victory: and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces;* will not be fully accompliſhed till death, our laſt enemy, ſhall be deſtroyed by the reſurrection, and *Jeſus Chriſt* ſhall introduce his elect into eternal glory. This expectation ought to produce in us a great deſire to partake of theſe excellent promiſes, and be a powerful motive to us, to bleſs the Lord who has promiſed them, and to be glad and rejoice continually in expectation of that ſalvation, which ſhall be fully revealed at the ſecond coming of our Lord *Jeſus Chriſt*.

CHAP. XXVI.

I. *ISAIAH* goes on to praiſe God for the bleſſings he would beſtow on his people, and expreſſes the confidence which the righteous have in God. II. He repreſents how men abuſe the forbearance of God; he adores his juſtice and power, which would appear in reſtoring peace to the *Jews*, after he had reduced them to the utmoſt extremity; and from all theſe conſiderations he comforts and encourages the people of God.

REFLECTIONS.

I. WE ought to meditate with faith and gratitude upon what is ſaid in this chapter, and in ſo many other prophecies, of the deliverance and peace which God would ſend his church, ſince theſe predictions principally relate to the times of the Goſpel. II. We learn

learn from this chapter, that the character of true believers is to truſt in God alone, to deſire nothing but him, and to ſeek him with all the powers of the ſoul; and that God, on his part, ſupports them and guides them in the way that they ſhould go, and takes care of every thing that relates to them. III. Another inſtruction that the prophet gives us is, that men commonly learn to fear God, and to do that which is right, when he chaſtiſes them, and they ſee his judgments; but that the wicked abuſe the forbearance of God, and are hardened in their ſins, when he ſhews them favour; and inſtead of being converted, become yet more wicked. Laſtly, The aſſurances which the prophet gives the *Jews* of the divine protection, ſhould effectually comfort the church, and all its true members, make them eaſy in the worſt of times, and fill them continually with hope and joy.

CHAP. XXVII.

GOD promiſes by his power to puniſh the enemies of the *Jews*, to be reconciled with his people, and to bring the diſperſed in *Aſſyria* and *Egypt* again to *Jeruſalem*, there to worſhip the Lord.

REFLECTIONS.

WE may gather from this chapter, I. That how great ſoever the power of the enemies of God be, he is more powerful than they, and will not fail to ſet bounds to their malice. II. That there is this difference between the afflictions with which God viſits his church, and the judgments he diſplays againſt idolators; that God afflicts his church in pure kindneſs, to cleanſe and purify it: whereas he puniſhes the other in his wrath, and for their deſtruction. This goodneſs of the Lord appears in the promiſes here made to gather together the diſperſed *Jews*, and to bring them again to *Jeruſalem*, which actually came to paſs after the captivity of *Babylon*. This teaches us, that God does never intirely withdraw his grace and protection from

from his people, and from thoſe he loves; and that after he has afflicted and humbled them, he reſtores them to reſt and peace, and gives them new proofs of this love, and freſh reaſon to celebrate his mercy.

CHAP. XXVIII.

THIS is a prophecy againſt *Ephraim*; that is, againſt the kingdom of the ten tribes, and againſt the kingdom of *Judah*. I. *Iſaiah* foretels, that they ſhould be delivered into the hands of their enemies becauſe of their pride, their diſſoluteneſs, and their idolatries. II. He reproaches the prieſts and the prophets for following the general corruption; for being as ignorant and wicked as the people; and for their falſe confidence, in thinking themſelves ſecure from the judgments of God. III. He denounces thoſe judgments againſt them, promiſing, nevertheleſs, that God would diſplay his infinite power and wiſdom in behalf of *Jeruſalem*; and that as the plowman, after he has prepared the earth, and ſowed his ſeed, ſets apart the good grain, ſo the Lord would ſpare the men of *Judah*, and not deſtroy them with the ungodly.

REFLECTIONS.

THE threatenings of *Iſaiah* againſt the *Iſraelites* teach us, I. That the ſins of men, and particularly pride, drunkenneſs, and diſſoluteneſs, are the cauſe of thoſe miſeries which befel them, and of the chaſtiſements which God inflicts upon them. II. That if theſe ſins are diſpleaſing to God in all perſons, they are ſtill more odious in the miniſters of religion; and that ignorance and corruption, in thoſe who ought to teach others, produces depravity in the people, and occaſions the ruin and deſtruction of the church. III. It is to be obſerved, that *Iſaiah* complains of the falſe confidence of the *Iſraelites*, who, at the very time the wrath of God was ready to fall upon them, in the profoundeſt ſecurity ſaid, *We have made a covenant with death; and when the overflowing ſcourge ſhall*

ſhall paſs through, it ſhall not come unto us. Thus men flatter themſelves in their ſins, and think themſelves ſafe, when God is preparing to ſurprize and overwhelm them with his judgments. IV. God ſhews his goodneſs, by promiſing to *lay in Sion, for a foundation, a tried ſtone, a precious corner-ſtone, a ſure foundation.* This prophecy properly relates to *Jeſus Chriſt*, and is ſeveral times applied to him in the New Teſtament, where it is ſaid, that *Chriſt* is that corner-ſtone upon which the church is built, and which is an occaſion of ſtumbling, and a rock of offence to unbelievers, and a means of ſalvation to all thoſe that believe in him.

CHAP. XXIX.

THE prophet, in this and the following chapters, ſpeaks of the coming of the *Aſſyrians*, who were to make war upon *Jeruſalem*, and foretels, I. That that city, which he here calls *Ariel*, ſhould in a ſhort time be viſited and beſieged, but that God would diſperſe and confound thoſe that made war againſt them. II. He ſays, that all theſe evils would be occaſioned by the great hardneſs of heart, the blindneſs and ſecurity which reigned, even among the prophets, and by the hypocriſy of the *Jews*. III. To theſe threatenings *Iſaiah* joins promiſes of deliverance.

REFLECTIONS.

IN this chapter we are to obſerve, I. That *Iſaiah*'s threatenings againſt *Jeruſalem*, and againſt thoſe who ſhould attack it, were executed a few years after, when *Sennacherib* came to beſiege that city, and was forced to retreat with the loſs of his army. II. That it was the blindneſs of the prophets, and the hypocriſy of the *Jews*, which obliged God to uſe them in this manner. From hence we may conclude, that the ignorance and impiety of the governors of the church is always attended with great corruption: and that God abhors the worſhip we pay him, when it is only external

external and hypocritical. This is expreſſed in theſe words, which our Saviour likewiſe mentions in the Goſpel: *This people draw near to me with their mouths, and honour me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.* III. We alſo learn from this chapter, that it is great folly, and extreme impiety, to pretend to hide ourſelves from the eyes of the Lord, and to eſcape his knowledge and his power; and that nothing can ſcreen us from his judgments, nor hinder him from diſpoſing of us as the potter diſpoſes of the clay. Laſtly, God gives proof of his love and mercy to his people, in promiſing, after he had threatened them, to take pity on them, and reſtore them to a glorious condition.

CHAP. XXX.

I. *ISAIAH* denounces the utmoſt miſeries againſt thoſe *Jews*, who, inſtead of quietly waiting for the aſſiſtance of the Almighty againſt the *Aſſyrians*, had recourſe to the *Egyptians*, who would not hearken to the prophet of the Lord, and would even hinder them from ſpeaking. II. He aſſures them, they ſhould be delivered if they truſted in God rather than in man; that God was ready to ſhew them favour; that he would deliver them, and let them ſee the deſtruction of the *Aſſyrians*; and that afterwards they ſhould enjoy peace and happineſs. This proſperity the prophet expreſſes, by ſaying, that then the light of the ſun and moon ſhould be much greater than uſual, and by other figurative expreſſions.

REFLECTIONS.

THE completion of what is here read we find in the following chapters, wherein *Iſaiah* relates what happened when the *Aſſyrians* came to make war upon *Jeruſalem*. In the mean time, we muſt make theſe three reflections on what we read in this chapter. I. The threatenings denounced by *Iſaiah* againſt the *Jews*, who, inſtead of depending upon God alone, imagined

imagined they ſhould be defended by the king of *Egypt*, teach us, that God does not bleſs thoſe, who, in time of danger, have recourſe to ill means for their deliverance, and who truſt in men rather than in him. To this purpoſe the prophet ſays, *In reſt ſhall ye be ſaved, in quietneſs and confidence ſhall be your ſtrength.* II. *Iſaiah*'s ſharp rebuke of the *Jews*, for refuſing to obey the prophets, and for ſtopping their mouths, and not ſuffering them to ſpeak, ſhews us, that it is a token of the greateſt obſtinacy not to hearken to the voice of God, nor ſuffer his ſervants to ſpeak the truth. III. God expreſſes his great kindneſs when, regardleſs of the ſins of the *Jews*, he tells them, he waited to be gracious unto them; that he would again have mercy on them, and protect *Jeruſalem* and its inhabitants againſt the *Aſſyrians*. This kindneſs and mercy of God towards men ſhould engage us chiefly to ſeek his favour, to rely on him alone, and to live in ſuch a manner, that we may have him for our protector, and put our whole confidence in him.

CHAP. XXXI.

THE prophet continues to threaten thoſe who ſhould ſeek for help from the *Egyptians* againſt the *Aſſyrians;* and to aſſure the *Jews* of the divine protection.

REFLECTIONS.

THE principal inſtruction to be drawn from this chapter is, that to put our confidence in man, rather than in the divine aſſiſtance, is to ſin againſt God, and to deceive ourſelves. As *Iſaiah* ſaid, that the *Egyptians* were men, and not God, we ſhould always remember, that men are very weak, that all their power is but vanity, and that they who depend upon them ſhall be deceived in their expectation; whereas thoſe who hope in God, and fear him, and reſt wholly upon his power, are entirely ſafe. This the *Jews* ſhould have acknowledged, when *Sinnacherib*, king of *Aſſyria*, came againſt *Jeruſalem*. His approach and progreſs

at firſt threw terror all around; but God confounded the enterprizes of that prince, and, moved by the prayers of *Hezekiah*, who truſted in God alone, reſtored peace to *Jeruſalem*, as we read in the ſequel.

CHAP. XXXII.

I. *ISAIAH* deſcribes the felicity which the *Jews* would enjoy under the reign of king *Hezekiah*, after the defeat and retreat of the king of *Aſſyria*, and he foretels, that then good men ſhould be exalted, and that unjuſt and wicked men ſhould be abaſed, II He applies himſelf to the women of *Jeruſalem*, who lived in luxury and effeminacy, and warns them to bewail the calamities which were to fall upon them; promiſing, at the ſame time, that peace and proſperity ſhould ſucceed ſorrow and trouble, and that the judgments of God ſhould fall heavy like hail upon the *Aſſyrians*,

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter affords us the ſame reflections as the former, upon the great deliverance that God was to grant to *Jeruſalem* in *Hezekiah*'s time. Beſides, what *Iſaiah* ſays, concerning the happineſs and peace which the *Jews* ſhould enjoy under the government of that king, after having been in extreme danger, ſhould make us ſenſible, that it is a great bleſſing to a nation to be ſubject to juſt and religious princes and magiſtrates. But it is a much greater happineſs to have God for our protector, and to be aſſured of his aſſiſtance and favour in all our wants and neceſſities.

CHAP. XXXIII.

THIS is again a prophecy of the ruin of the *Aſſyrians*, who were to come againſt *Jeruſalem*, and greatly alarm the *Jews* in the reign of *Hezekiah*. *Iſaiah* promiſes, that this juſt and pious king ſhould be bleſſed; that *Jeruſalem* ſhould be preſerved by the power of God, and the army of *Sennacherib*, king of *Aſſyria*, deſtroyed,

REFLEC-

REFLECTIONS.

THE firſt inſtruction this chapter affords us is, that all the deſigns, and all the attempts of the enemies of God and his church, are vain and ineffectual; that they cannot reſiſt the power of the Lord, and that whatever they undertake againſt him, does only turn to his glory and their confuſion. It muſt further be conſidered, that the threatenings contained in this chapter relate in general to all wicked men, ſince God is to them a conſuming fire. *Sinners are afraid; fearfulneſs hath ſurprized the hypocrites;* ſo that they ſhall ſay, *Who among us ſhall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us ſhall dwell with everlaſting burnings?* Theſe words preſent us with a lively image of the horror and deſpair which ſhall ſeize the wicked, when God ſhall come to judge them. Take notice likewiſe, that what *Iſaiah* ſaid of good king *Hezekiah*, agrees to all good men; and, as the prophet expreſſes it, *He that walketh righteouſly, and ſpeaketh uprightly; he that deſpiſeth the gain of oppreſſions, and ſhutteth his eyes from ſeeing evil, he ſhall dwell on high, and ſhall lack nothing.* In theſe words we ſee what are the characters of true piety, and the happy condition of its votaries. Laſtly, From this chapter we may conclude, that as God formerly delivered *Jeruſalem*, when invaded by the *Aſſyrians*, he will conſtantly be the protector of the church, and of all that fear him; ſo that they may boldly ſay, *The Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king, he will ſave us.*

CHAP. XXXIV.

THIS chapter contains threatenings againſt the *Edomites*, whoſe ruin God denounces. *Iſaiah* propheſies, that *Idumea* ſhould be deſolate; that kings ſhould no longer reign there; and that it ſhould be reduced to a wilderneſs.

REFLEC-

REFLECTIONS.

THERE are two reflections to be made upon this chapter. I. That the *Edomites*, who were neighbours to the *Jews*, and who were deſcended from *Eſau*, brother to the patriarch *Jacob*, were quite deſtroyed by the king of *Aſſyria*, ſome time after this prediction of *Iſaiah*; that their country was made a wilderneſs, and that they never did recover from that deſolation; ſo that the threatenings which *Iſaiah* and other prophets had pronounced againſt them were put in execution. II. We are to take notice, that God dealt thus with them, becauſe they, at all times, dealt wickedly with the *Jews*, who were their brethren, and becauſe they rejoiced at their fall. Thus the deſtruction of *Idumea* is an example of God's judgment upon thoſe that are cruel and unjuſt, and who wiſh ill to others, and rejoice in their miſeries.

CHAP. XXXV.

THE prophet deſcribes, in figurative expreſſions, the *Jews* joy in their own deliverance, and the confuſion of their enemies.

REFLECTIONS.

WHAT is here ſaid relates firſt to the happy ſtate of the *Jews*, when God delivered them from the invaſion of the king of *Aſſyria*, and afterwards, when they were brought again from the captivity of *Babylon*; whilſt the *Edomites*, whoſe ruin *Iſaiah* had foretold in the foregoing chapter, and their other enemies, were deſtroyed. This paſſage of the prophet is likewiſe to be applied to the Chriſtian church, and to the bleſſings that God would beſtow upon it, by the means of the Meſſiah redeeming and ſanctifying the faithful, deſtroying their ſpiritual enemies, and conferring on them eternal happineſs. The laſt words of this chapter expreſs the ſentiments of joy and gratitude, which ſo great a deliverance produces in the hearts of all true believers.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXXVI.

THE hiſtory contained in this and the following chapters proves the completion of the predictions ſet down in the foregoing chapters, which foretold, that God would deliver *Jeruſalem* from the invaſion of the *Aſſyrians*. *Sennacherib*, king of *Aſſyria*, makes war againſt *Hezekiah*, king of *Judah*, and after he had taken ſeveral cities from him, he ſends *Rabſhakeh* to *Jeruſalem*, to ſummon *Hezekiah* and the *Jews* to ſurrender, and to blaſpheme againſt God, ſaying, that as the Gods of the nations which he had conquered had not been able to deliver their land, ſo neither would the God whom *Hezekiah* worſhipped be able to deliver him. This ſame hiſtory is recorded in the ſixteenth and following chapters of the Second Book of *Kings*.

REFLECTIONS.

WE muſt look upon the war which the king of *Aſſyria* made againſt *Hezekiah*, and the advantages which that idolatrous king obtained over him, as a puniſhment to *Hezekiah*'s ſubjects, and a trial ſent by God to this pious prince, to engage him and all his people to have recourſe to him, and to give them afterwards extraordinary proofs of his power in delivering them from ſo great a danger. It is next to be obſerved, that the haughty and impious ſpeeches of *Sennacherib*, and his blaſphemies againſt God, which ſo much aſtoniſhed *Hezekiah*, haſtened the ruin of that idolatrous king, and induced God to deſtroy him. When men fly in the face of the Almighty, and inſult him with impious ſpeeches, he fails not to ſet bounds to their inſolence. This ought to inſpire us with an utter abhorrence of every thing that affronts the Divinity; and particularly of blaſphemy, and all other diſcourſes that violate the reverence which is due to the great God whom we adore.

CHAP. XXXVII.

I. HEZEKIAH acquaints *Iſaiah* with the blaſphemies of *Sennacherib*, king of *Aſſyria*; and the prophet aſſures him of God's aſſiſtance. II. *Sennacherib* is obliged to leave *Judea*, becauſe the king of *Ethiopia* had declared war againſt him; and ſends letters to *Hezekiah*, full of threatenings and blaſphemies againſt God. III. *Hezekiah* carries theſe letters to the temple of the Lord, and implores his aſſiſtance. IV. *Iſaiah* aſſures him from God, that the king of *Aſſyria* ſhould not enter *Jeruſalem*, but ſhould return to his own country. V. An angel deſtroys the army of *Sennacherib*; who, being returned to his own country, is murdered by his own children.

REFLECTIONS.

WE are to obſerve in this chapter, I. That *Hezekiah*, extremely alarmed by the threatenings of *Sennacherib*, had recourſe to the interceſſion of *Iſaiah*; carried to the temple the inſulting letters which that idolatrous king had ſent him; and offered up to God a prayer, full of ſincere piety, firm confidence, and great zeal for the glory of God. Thus thoſe who fear God have recourſe to him, and the prayers of good men, in all their troubles. II. By the aſſurances *Iſaiah* gave *Hezekiah* of the divine aſſiſtance, we learn, that what chiefly provoked the Lord was the extreme inſolence of the king of *Aſſyria*, and his blaſphemies; and that God never fails to confound the proud and ungodly. *Iſaiah*'s meſſage to *Hezekiah* expreſſes very ſtrongly the pride of *Sennacherib*, and at the ſame time his weakneſs, and the power wherewith God would ſet bounds to his malice, by deſtroying him, and delivering *Jeruſalem*. Laſtly, it appears from this chapter, that *Iſaiah*'s promiſes, and the confidence of *Hezekiah*, were not in vain. Providence thought fit that *Tyrhakah*, king of *Ethiopia*, ſhould declare war againſt *Sennacherib*, to oblige him to retire from *Hezekiah*'s dominions;

nions; the army of the *Aſſyrians* was miraculouſly defeated by an angel, and *Sennacherib* himſelf, at his return from this expedition, was aſſaſſinated by his ſons in the temple of the idol whom he worſhiped. In theſe events every one may ſee, that truſt in God and prayers are very effectual; that the power of God is infinite; that he is juſt, and that ſooner or later he puniſhes wicked princes, and in general all thoſe who affront him by their impiety and their pride.

CHAP. XXXVIII.

KING *Hezekiah* being ſick, *Iſaiah* comes to acquaint him that he was to die; but God being moved by the prayers of this prince, promiſes him fifteen years longer life, and confirms the promiſe by a miracle. *Hezekiah* being recovered, praiſes God in a ſong.

REFLECTIONS.

I. IT is to be obſerved, that about the time *Hezekiah* had been attacked by the *Aſſyrians*, God viſited him with a mortal diſeaſe. This was a new trial for that prince whom God loved, and which was to ſerve to manifeſt and ſtrengthen his faith and piety. For the ſame reaſon God afflicts his children after divers manners, and after he has delivered them from one danger, ſuffers them ſometimes to fall into another. II. The prayer which *Hezekiah* made to God in his ſickneſs, beſeeching the Lord to remember, that he had walked before him in integrity, ſhews, that men apply to God with great confidence in time of adverſity, and at the approach of death, when they have lived in holineſs, and done that which is right in his ſight. III. In the ſudden healing of *Hezekiah*, and in the miracle God wrought for his ſake, we may obſerve the power of God, his love to that prince, and the efficacy of the prayers of the righteous. Laſtly, Thoſe whom God has delivered from death, or any other danger, ought, in imitation of *Hezekiah*, who

praiſes God in a ſong of thankſgiving, to celebrate his loving-kindneſs, to preſerve the remembrance of it, and to employ their life to his glory.

CHAP. XXXIX.

THE king of *Babylon* having ſent ambaſſadors to *Hezekiah*, that prince ſhewed them his treaſures: which *Iſaiah* reproved him for, and told him, that thoſe treaſures, and even his children, ſhould be carried to *Babylon*.

REFLECTIONS.

THESE are the reflections which the ſcripture makes on what is related in this chapter. When the ambaſſadors of the king of *Babylon* came to *Hezekiah*, to inquire after the miracle that had happened, when the ſhadow of the ſun-dial of *Ahaz* went backward with the ſun, God left *Hezekiah* to himſelf to try him; but *Hezekiah* rendered not unto God according to the benefit done unto him, for his heart was liſted up; therefore the wrath of God was kindled againſt *Jeruſalem*. Upon which *Iſaiah* told him, that his children and his treaſures ſhould be carried to *Babylon*; but *Hezekiah* and the inhabitants of *Jeruſalem* humbling themſelves, the wrath of God came not upon them in the days of *Hezekiah*.—We may learn from hence, how eaſily men forget themſelves in proſperity; and that thoſe who have done their duty in time of affliction, often grow remiſs when it is over. This hiſtory ſhews likewiſe, that worldly advantages are vain and uncertain, and that we ſhould never be puffed up with the poſſeſſion of them. Laſtly, it appears from hence, that God chaſtiſes thoſe he loves, when they grow remiſs and offend him; but that he is reconciled, as ſoon as they repent and humble themſelves.

CHAP. XL.

I. THE prophet comforts the people of God, and aſſures them, God, whoſe word and promiſes are

are always ſure, would deliver them. II. He exhorts them to rejoice at that great deliverance. III. He deſcribes the infinite majeſty, power, and wiſdom of God, and the folly of thoſe that worſhip idols. Laſtly, He declares the happineſs of thoſe who worſhip the true God, and put their truſt in him.

REFLECTIONS.

THE promiſes which God makes in this chapter, to comfort and redeem his people, are not to be explained only of the deliverance wrought by the *Jews*, in freeing them from the king of *Aſſyria*, and bringing them again from the *Babyloniſh* captivity; they chiefly relate to the times of the Goſpel, and in particular to the coming of *John* the Baptiſt, who was ſent by God to prepare men to believe in *Jeſus Chriſt*. This we learn in the beginning of St. *John*'s Goſpel, where this prophecy is applied to *John* the Baptiſt; *The voice of one crying in the wilderneſs, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths ſtrait.* To the ſame times muſt be referred what *Iſaiah* ſays of the ſtability of the word of God, in oppoſition to man's inſignificancy, as St. *Peter* teaches, when he, applying to the Goſpel the words of *Iſaiah*, ſays, *All fleſh is graſs, and all the goodlineſs thereof is as the flower of the field. The graſs withereth, the flower fadeth; but the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is that word which by the Goſpel is preached unto you*, 1 Peter i. 25. What the prophet ſays in the latter part of this chapter, is very remarkable; he there ſpeaks of the majeſty of God in exalted terms, and the moſt noble ideas; he repreſents in a lively manner the ſtupidity of idolators, who worſhip dumb idols, which their own hands have framed; and deſcribes the perfect happineſs of thoſe who put their truſt in God alone. Theſe diſcourſes of the prophet teach us, that God abhors idolatry, and neither ought nor can be preſented by any image; that we ought to adore and fear this great God, before whom all creatures are as nothing; and that all our happineſs depends on his favour, and our truſt in him.

CHAP.

CHAP. XLI.

I. THE prophet addreſſes himſelf to the iſles, that is to the diſtant nations, and exhorts them to own the power of God, and the vanity of idols. II. He aſſures the *Iſraelites* of the divine protection; promiſing to make them triumph over their enemies, and to ſhower his favours upon them. Laſtly, He ſhews, that the Lord was the only true God; and that the idols were only falſe divinities, becauſe they could not foretel things to come; and promiſes that *Jeruſalem* ſhould be reſtored.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter teaches us, I. That the Lord is the true God, who ought alone to be worſhipped and adored; that his power is infinite; that he diſpoſes of kings, and of all events; and that thoſe who ſerve idols are mad. II. We here ſee the firmneſs of God's covenant with his ancient people, and his love to them; from whence we may conclude, that as the Chriſtian church is not leſs dear to him, he will never forſake it; that whatever condition it be in, it has nothing to fear; and that the enemies of the church, far from compaſſing its ruin, ſhall be themſelves deſtroyed. III. We ought to take particular notice of the reaſon which the prophet gives to prove that idols were not gods; ſaying, that they could not foretel things to come, nor do any hurt or good to men. This conſideration, which ſo ſtrongly demonſtrates the vanity of idols, moſt plainly ſhews, that the many prophecies we have in the holy ſcriptures could proceed from none but God. It proves that there is a God, who knows and governs all things, and that the holy ſcriptures are true and divinely inſpired. Laſtly, this teaches us, that the great God, who knoweth and can do all things, is the Lord of all men, the judge of the world, and he who ought to be feared: ſince, as he is almighty, he will exert his power for the good of thoſe

that

that worſhip him, and to puniſh thoſe that rebel againſt him.

CHAP. XLII.

I. *ISAIAH* goes on to foretel the *Jews* deliverance and reſtoration by *Cyrus*; but he chiefly ſpeaks of the coming of the Meſſiah, to beſtow his favours on the *Jews*, and alſo on the *Gentiles*. II. He exhorts men to praiſe God, and to rejoice in the happineſs which they were ſhortly to enjoy. III. He foretels, that idolators ſhould be confounded, and idolatry deſtroyed. IV. He complains of the blindneſs of the *Jews*; and declares, that becauſe of their ſins they ſhould be delivered into the hands of their enemies.

REFLECTIONS.

ST. *Matthew*, quoting the firſt verſes of this chapter, teaches us, that this prophecy repreſents the characters of the Meſſiah; which are, his great meekneſs and humility, the glory of his works, and the power wherewith he was to eſtabliſh his kingdom throughout all the nations of the earth. Theſe are ſo many proofs that Jeſus is the true Meſſiah promiſed by the prophets, and ſo many inducements to us, to ſubmit ourſelves with joy to this Saviour, abounding in power and goodneſs. II. *Iſaiah* expreſſes the ſentiments of joy and gratitude which men would be affected with, when the Saviour of the world ſhould be manifeſted: which are deſcribed in theſe words, *Sing unto the Lord a new ſong, and his praiſe from the end of the earth. Ye that go down to the ſea, and all that is therein; the iſles and the inhabitants thereof; let them give glory to the Lord, and declare his praiſe.* Theſe are the thanks we ought to render inceſſantly to God, upon account of the good things he has done for us in *Chriſt Jeſus*; and particularly, for delivering us from the idolatry which formerly reigned in the world. III. The example of the *Jews*, who were expoſed to deſolation becauſe of their blindneſs and ſtupidity, is a warning

to

to us, that it is ſin which expoſes men to ſo many evils, and engages God to forſake them, when they ſhut their eyes againſt the light which enlightens them, when they are deaf to his voice, and refuſe to walk in his ways, and to keep his law.

CHAP. XLIII.

I. GOD promiſes to deliver his people by his infinite power, and to bring them back from their diſperſion. II. He declares that he was the only true God who created all things, and who made himſelf known to the *Jews*; and that he would not fail to gather them together again. III. He complains, that that people had not ſerved him as they ought, and threatens to chaſtiſe them; but promiſes, however, to be reconciled with them, and to forgive them.

REFLECTIONS.

WE ſee in the firſt part of this chapter the love of God to the *Jews*. That love appears in the aſſurances he gives them of his protection, as being their God, their Saviour, and their King; and in the promiſes he makes them, of delivering them from the *Babyloniſh* captivity. Theſe promiſes are likewiſe applicable to the Chriſtian Church, and to all the truly faithful, and are very proper to comfort and fill them with hope and joy. The ſecond part of this chapter affords us powerful motives to fear the Lord our God; ſince he is the Lord, and the only true God, that has been from all times, that has made all things, that knows what is to come, and does what he pleaſes, ſo that nothing can reſiſt him, and from his hand nothing can deliver us. God's reproaching of the *Jews*, for having provoked and offended him by their ſacrifices, and by the ſervice they paid him, teaches us, that all worſhip which conſiſts purely of ceremonies, and of the externals of religion, is abominable to the Lord. Laſtly, The promiſes of pardon, at the end of this chapter, ſhew, that if God afflicts men for their correction,

rection, he is likewiſe always ready to ſhew mercy to them, when they humble themſelves; that it is he alone who pardons ſins; and that he does it only for his own ſake, and out of pure mercy.

CHAP. XLIV.

THIS chapter contains, I. Expreſs promiſes of the deliverance of the *Jews*, and of the favours which God would beſtow upon them. II. A beautiful deſcription of the folly of idolators. III. An exhortation to the *Jews*, to rejoice in the hopes that God would bring them out of captivity, and would ſettle them again in their own country by means of *Cyrus* king of *Perſia*.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE promiſes which God made to his people, to redeem them, to cauſe them to increaſe and multiply, and to bleſs them, began to be accompliſhed when he delivered the *Jews* from the captivity of *Babylon*; but they were perfectly fulfilled when God, according to his promiſe, ſent his Son into the world to ſave mankind. Wherefore it is our duty to meditate upon theſe gracious promiſes with faith and gratitude; to rejoice in God, and return him thanks for the completion of them. II. This chapter contains a deſcription of the vanity of idols, which deſerves to be read with care and attention. *Iſaiah* repreſents the folly of thoſe that worſhip images made of wood or other materials, and fall down before the work of their own hands, and before dead things. By which we ſee into what extravagancies men are capable of falling, when left to themſelves, and deprived of the light of the divine word; and what condition we ſhould ſtill be in, if we had not been delivered from idolatry, to ſerve the true and living God. This ſhews likewiſe with what reſpect and fear we ought to worſhip the Almighty God, who is the governor of the world, who knows all things; and as his power knows

knows no bounds, can do good to thoſe that reverence him, and puniſh thoſe that offend him. The laſt verſes of this chapter are remarkable: God therein promiſes, not only that the *Jews* ſhould return from *Babylon*, and their city and temple be rebuilt; but he ſays, this ſhould be done by means of a king named *Cyrus*; which accordingly came to paſs about two hundred years after this prediction.

CHAP. XLV.

IN this chapter it is foretold, that there ſhould ariſe a king named *Cyrus*, to whom God would give great power, and who ſhould ſet the *Jews* at liberty, and ſend them back from *Babylon* into their own country. The prophet ſays, that God would do all this to manifeſt his power and love to his people; and to ſhew, that the idols of the heathens were falſe gods; and that there was no other God beſides the God of *Iſrael*.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter contains one of the moſt expreſs and moſt remarkable prophecies in the Old Teſtament. The purport of it is, that a king named *Cyrus* ſhould become exceeding powerful; that God would go before him, and grant him great victories; that he would give him immenſe riches, and the monarchy of *Aſia*; and that this prince would grant the *Jews* leave to return to their own country, and cauſe them to rebuild *Jeruſalem*, and the temple. Theſe things were foretold two hundred years before they happened; at the end of which time *Cyrus*, the king of *Perſia*, deſtroyed the monarchy of the *Chaldeans*, and publiſhed an edict in behalf of the *Jews*, cauſing them to return to their own country. Theſe predictions, which were ſo exactly fulfilled, invincibly prove the divine original of the Holy Scriptures, and the truth of religion. They prove, that there is a God who knows things to come, and who preſides over all events, and

and every thing that happens in the world. They prove, in particular, that he diſpoſes of things which depend upon the will of man, without depriving him of his liberty; ſo that men, without knowing it, bring about the deſigns of Providence. By this the true God is diſtinguiſhed from idols, as is obſerved ſeveral times in this and the former chapters. From the whole we must conclude, that God alone is to be feared and adored; that he diſpoſes all things with wiſdom; and that the end he propoſes to himſelf in all his works, is to make himſelf known to men, and to engage them to ſerve and fear him. This appeared ſtill plainer in the accompliſhment of the promiſes made of ſending *Jeſus Chriſt*, and eſtabliſhing his kingdom.

CHAP. XLVI.

ISAIAH foretels, that the *Babylonians* ſhould be destroyed; and that it ſhould then appear, that *Bell* and *Nebo*, which were their idols, were nothing but falſe gods; and that the Lord was the protector of the *Jews*, and the only true God. The prophet adds, that God would bring from the eaſt a man, who ſhould execute the deſigns of his providence; by which he denotes *Cyrus*, who would come from *Perſia*, to ſubdue the *Babylonians*, and ſet the *Jews* at liberty.

REFLECTIONS.

WHAT is here ſaid of the deſtruction of *Babylon*, was fulfilled when that city was taken, and the empire of the *Babylonians* paſſed to the *Medes* and *Perſians*. God himſelf declares, that this great event would be an illuſtrious proof to the *Jews*, and to all nations, that the gods of the heathens were but dead idols; that he alone was the Almighty; that futurity was perfectly known to him; and that nothing could hinder the execution of his deſigns. We diſcover, likewiſe, in the deſtruction of *Babylon*, God's love to his people,

and

and the truth of his promiſes. God here aſſures the *Jews*, that as he had taken care of them from the beginning, he would always be the ſame to them; from whence we may conclude, that God will never ceaſe to love and protect his church, and that it is not poſſible he ſhould forget his own people. This chapter contains likewiſe a remarkable deſcription of the madneſs of idolators, who, after they had made images of gold or ſilver, fell down before them, and implored the aſſiſtance of the gods, who could neither ſtir from their place, nor hear them, nor deliver them. From whence we learn, that idolatry is the greateſt inſult that can be offered to the Deity, and at the ſame time the greateſt error that men can poſſibly fall into.

CHAP. XLVII.

ISAIAH continues to propheſy againſt *Babylon*. He foretels, that God would humble the pride of the *Babylonians*; and that after he had delivered his people into their hands to be chaſtiſed by them, he would ſtrip them of their power and glory which they were ſo proud of; and would puniſh them for the barbarities they had exerciſed againſt his people, for their pride, their idolatry, and other crimes.

REFLECTIONS.

WE are to conſider on this chapter, I. That God diſpoſes of all things, and particularly of the moſt powerful kings and ſtates, with an irreſiſtible power, and at the ſame time with perfect juſtice. This appeared formerly in the abaſement and deſtruction of *Babylon*, which came to paſs according to the predictions of *Iſaiah*. II. It appears, that theſe things engaged God to puniſh the *Babylonians*, their pride, their inhuman treatment to the *Jews*, and their idolatry. Therefore we cannot doubt but theſe ſins expoſe men, in a particular manner, to the wrath of God. This proves too, that God is the judge of the world;

world; that he alone is to be feared; and that he is engaged by his goodneſs and juſtice to do good to thoſe that ſerve him, and ſtudy to pleaſe him.

CHAP. XLVIII.

I. *ISAIAH* tells the *Jews*, that God had forewarned them of what was coming upon them that they might renounce idolatry, confeſs that he was the only God, and be converted and turn unto him. II. He tells them, that God, for his own ſake, and for the glory of his name, would not entirely deſtroy them; but would execute his judgments and threatenings on the *Babylonians*, their enemies. III. That if they had hearkened to the voice of God, they would not have been delivered up to the *Babylonians*; that nevertheleſs God would redeem them, and bring them again from *Babylon*; but that there ſhould be no peace for their enemies, nor for the wicked in general.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter ſhews, I. That God manifeſts himſelf to men, and makes known his will to them, and his purpoſes, as far as it is neceſſary, to teach them to fear him, and to render them happy. II. It is to be well obſerved, that God ſays here, he had declared things to come, long before they happened, to convince the *Jews* that he was the only true God, and to turn them from the worſhip of idols. This conſideration, which God propoſes in ſo many places of this Book, and in the other prophets, deſerves our moſt ſerious reflections. God could not more expreſsly declare, that one of the cleareſt ways in which he has revealed himſelf to mankind, are the predictions of the prophets; which, with the ſtrongeſt evidence, prove that there is a God and a Providence, which governs all things: Therefore we ought to give particular heed to this proof, that we may, by this means, be confirmed in the belief of the truth of religion, and the practice of our duty. III. The third

inſtruction

instruction is, that if men on their part would act ſuitably to what God does for them, they would enjoy perfect happineſs, and would not compel him, as it were, to puniſh them. God ſhews his favourable diſpoſitions to men in theſe expreſſions; *I am the Lord thy God, which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way thou ſhouldſt go. O that thou hadſt hearkened to my commandments, then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteouſneſs as the waves of the ſea.* Laſtly, It appears from this chapter, that, if God is engaged to puniſh men, he withdraws his ſcourge from them as ſoon as he obſerves them humbled. Thus he acted towards the *Jews*, when he ſent them into captivity, and afterwards brought them again in peace.

CHAP. XLIX.

I. *ISAIAH* proclaims the glorious reſtoration of the *Jews*, and at the ſame time the coming of the Meſſiah, who ſhould bring ſalvation and deliverance to all nations; and promiſes the *Jews*, that God would ſet them at liberty by freeing them from the *Babyloniſh* captivity. II. He invites all creatures to rejoice at the proſpect of ſo great ſalvation; he comforts the *Jews*, who might have thought themſelves forſaken of God; he aſſures them, that the Lord would protect and reſtore them, multiply them exceedingly, procure them the favour of ſtrange princes, and would make their glory viſible to all people, by ſubduing their oppreſſors.

REFLECTIONS.

WHAT is ſaid in this chapter was in part fulfilled, when, about two hundred years after theſe predictions, the *Jews* were recalled from the *Babyloniſh* captivity. God then diſplayed, in a glorious manner, his power, in the ſight of all nations: he gave his people ſtrange princes for their protectors, ſuch as *Cyrus*, *Darius*, and ſeveral others; he gathered them together in their own

own country, and cauſed them there to increaſe and multiply, and bleſſed them exceedingly. But theſe promiſes more eſpecially relate to the Chriſtian church. Here we ſee clearly the calling of the Gentiles, and the marvellous increaſe of the church of *Chriſt*. This St. *Paul* teaches us, when to convince the *Jews* that the Goſpel was to be preached to the heathens, he cites the prophecy taken from this chapter: *I have ſet thee to be a light to the Gentiles, that thou ſhouldſt be for ſalvation unto the ends of the earth*, Acts xiii. 47. and when the ſame apoſtle applies likewiſe to the times of the Goſpel theſe other words of *Iſaiah*, *In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of ſalvation have I helped thee; behold now is the accepted time, behold now is the day of Salvation*, 2 Cor. vi. 2. In that happy time the church ſaw her ſons multiply; and the kings and great men of the world ſubmitted to the Almighty God, and came into the number of his worſhippers. All who have the happineſs to be members of the church, ſhould be ſenſible of the value of theſe privileges, and poſſeſs them with gratitude and thankfulneſs. Chriſtian princes, in particular, ought to learn from hence, that their greateſt glory conſiſts in knowing God, in belonging to his church, in being the defenders and nurſing fathers of it, and in uſing their power to make it flouriſh more and more. Laſtly, We have here the ſtrongeſt aſſurances of God's care and love for his people; God declares, that though a woman may forget her ſucking child, he will never forget his church, which he has graven upon the palms of his hands. Theſe are promiſes full of comfort to the church in general, and to all its true members.

CHAP. L.

I. *ISAIAH* made uſe of the compariſon of a woman who had been divorced from her huſband, to ſhew the *Jews*, that if they had been rejected, it was becauſe they had forſaken God; that, however, God was able to deliver them, ſince he was governor

of the world, and nothing could reſiſt his power. II. He mentions the troubles which he had been expoſed to in the diſcharge of his miniſtry, and expreſſes his firm confidence in God.

REFLECTIONS.

WHAT *Iſaiah* ſays to the *Jews* in this chapter, ſhould lead us to obſerve, I. That God never forſakes men, till they have firſt forſaken him, and that their ſins interrupt the flow of his mercies towards them. II. That if the *Jews* were juſtly rejected for not hearkening to the voice of God and his prophets, our condemnation will be much more ſevere, if we hearken not to the voice of *Jeſus Chriſt*. III. The miniſters of the Lord may learn from what happened to *Iſaiah*, that they may expect to meet with much oppoſition in the diſcharge of their office; but that, however, they are not to leave their calling; for God will ſupport them, and all who labour and ſuffer for his ſake. Laſtly, We ſee, in the ſecond part of this chapter, a repreſentation of the contradictions *Jeſus Chriſt* was expoſed to, of the inſults he received from his crucifiers, and the glorious and happy iſſue of all his labours, when God raiſed him from the dead, and eſtabliſhed his kingdom, in ſpite of all oppoſition from the world.

CHAP. LI.

I. THE prophet promiſes the *Jews*, that as God had bleſſed *Abraham* and *Sarah*, by giving them a numerous poſterity, he would alſo comfort and increaſe them after their captivity; would give them reaſon to rejoice, and for their deliverance would exert the ſame power which he had formerly ſhewn againſt *Rahab*, that is, againſt *Egypt*, when he delivered their fathers, and made a way for them in the *Red Sea*. II. He exhorts them to truſt in God, who would not fail to comfort *Jeruſalem*, raiſing it from its ruins, after it had been deſtroyed by the *Chaldeans*, and then to deſtroy

ſtroy the *Chaldeans* themſelves, for all the miſchiefs they had brought upon the *Jews*.

REFLECTIONS.

IT muſt be obſerved, I. That, according to the promiſes contained in this chapter, God did reſtore the *Jews*, after he had afflicted them, and diſplayed his almighty power in their behalf, when he redeemed them from the captivity of *Babylon*. II. What is here ſaid, tends very much to the conſolation of the church in general. God's tender affection to the *Jewiſh* nation ſuffers us not to doubt, but he loves alſo the church of his own Son; and that if he afflicts it, he his nevertheleſs always its protector. III. The prophet teaches us not to fear men, though they appear never ſo formidable, ſince they are but mortals, and the Lord is infinitely more powerful than they. IV. What is here ſaid of the joy with which the *Jews* ſhould be filled, when the Lord brought them out of *Babylon*, is to be looked upon us a type of that great joy which *Jeſus Chriſt* would produce in the world. But it muſt likewiſe be obſerved, that this joy only belongs to the righteous, and that the conſolations we read of in this chapter, are only intended for the true people of God, for thoſe that ſeek the Lord, and that hear his voice, and have his law engraven in their hearts; but theſe promiſes do by no means relate to the ungodly, whom God has threatened to give to drink of the cup of his fury, and to overtake them with his judgments.

CHAP. LII.

THE prophet continues to promiſe, that God would reſtore *Jeruſalem*. He aſſures them that God would work wonders for their deliverance, in the ſight of all the earth, and bring them from *Babylon* with great joy.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS prophecy has two views; The firſt was, the deliverance of the captive *Jews* from *Babylon*; and in this reſpect theſe predictions were fulfilled when *Cyrus* put an end to their captivity, and they left the idolatrous nations to return to *Jeruſalem*, there to worſhip God as before. The ſecond and chief deſign of this prophecy was to foretel the redemption of mankind by *Jeſus Chriſt*, and that the happy news of this redemption, and of the coming of the kingdom of God, ſhould be publiſhed throughout the world by the apoſtles. This St. *Paul* teaches us, when he applies to the preaching of the Goſpel theſe words of *Iſaiah: How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publiſheth peace, that bringeth good tidings of good, that publiſheth ſalvation, that ſaith unto Sion, Thy God reigneth!* It is evident, from this chapter, I. That it is the duty of thoſe, to whom the Goſpel is preached, to bleſs God for having accompliſhed theſe noble promiſes; and to receive with joy and thankfulneſs the glad tidings of ſalvation which have been declared to them by the apoſtles and miniſters of *Jeſus Chriſt*. II. That it is the duty of all ſuch to ſeparate themſelves from the world, and from all its pollutions, and to ſanctify themſelves, that they may ſerve God with a pure heart, living in innocence, and in a manner anſwerable to thoſe ineſtimable bleſſings which God has conferred on them by his Son *Jeſus Chriſt*.

CHAP. LIII.

THIS prophecy deſcribes the humiliation and death of the Meſſiah; as alſo the glory to which God would exalt him after his reſurrection.

REFLECTIONS.

NOTHING can more clearly or more expreſsly repreſent the ſtate of humiliation through which the Meſſiah

Meſſiah was to paſs, nor his ſtate of exaltation and glory, than this admirable prophecy. The ſpirit of God here foretels, that the Meſſiah ſhould appear in a mean condition; that, for this reaſon, he ſhould be deſpiſed and rejected by the *Jews*; that he ſhould take our ſins upon him; that he ſhould, by his death, atone for them; that he ſhould be numbered with the tranſgreſſors; and that he ſhould be honourably interred after his death. We ſee likewiſe deſcribed in this prophecy the perfect innocence of our Lord, and his patience under all the injuries and affronts he received. Laſtly, The prophet foretels, that after the Meſſiah was made an offering for ſin, he ſhould ſee his ſeed, he ſhould prolong his days. The meaning of which is, that his death ſhould be followed by his reſurrection, and exaltation to glory; that he ſhould gather together his church; that he would juſtify thoſe that ſhould believe in him, and would eſtabliſh his kingdom in the world. This prophecy, which preſents us with a view of the principal circumſtances of the paſſion of *Jeſus Chriſt*, ſhould fully convince us, that he his the great Redeemer ſpoken of by the prophets; that his doctrine is true and divine; that his ſufferings and death are the wonderful means by which God has been pleaſed to ſave men; and that being now exalted in glory, he is able to ſave all thoſe who come unto God by him, and obey him.

CHAP. LIV.

I. *ISAIAH*, under the ſimilitude of a barren woman, to whom God would give children, and of a wife forſaken by her huſband, and afterwards reſtored to favour, repreſents God's love to the *Jews*, which would engage him to increaſe and bleſs them after their return from the captivity. II. He aſſures them, that God would no more be in wrath with his people; and, as he promiſed *Noah*, after the flood, never more to drown the earth, ſo he would never more deliver them into the hands of their enemies;

that he would reſtore *Jeruſalem* to a glorious ſtate, and would diſappoint and bring to nought all the contrivances and attempts formed againſt it.

REFLECTIONS.

WE ſee, in this chapter, how the prophet comforted the *Jews*, by promiſing them that God, after he had chaſtiſed them, and reduced them to a ſmall number, would bring them again from *Babylon*, would greatly increaſe them, and place them in a glorious ſtate, giving them proofs of his love, and defeating all the deſigns and contrivances formed againſt them by their enemies. Theſe promiſes do not terminate in the reeſtabliſhment of the *Jews*; their principal aim is to repreſent what God intended to do for his church, and what was to happen in the days of the Meſſiah, when the church ſhould be ſpread abroad throughout all the world, and be enlarged by the converſion of the Gentiles; when God would make an everlaſting covenant with it; and, though it was afflicted and perſecuted, God would defend it againſt all the enterpriſes of its enemies; ſo that, as our Lord ſays, the gates of hell ſhould not prevail againſt it. The truth of theſe predictions has appeared in the wonderful eſtabliſhment of the Chriſtian Church, and in its preſervation in the midſt of ſo many dangers and perſecutions to which it has been expoſed; but the church's glory will appear in more ſplendor, when it ſhall be ſpread over all the earth, and the kingdom of God be fully manifeſted. Theſe reflections ſhould make us ſenſible of our own happineſs, in being members of the church; and ſhould engage us continually to pray to God for the entire accompliſhment of theſe glorious promiſes.

CHAP. LV.

I. THE prophet, after he had foretold the happy reſtoration of the people of God, invites men to receive the mercies he offered them, and to be converted.

converted. II. He ſpeaks, of the efficacy of the word of God, and of the firmneſs of his promiſes made to the *Jews*.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter teaches us, I. That God is ſo kind as to invite men to partake of his favours, and even ſolicits them ſtrongly to receive them. Here let us conſider, that theſe invitations are particularly directed to us in the Goſpel, where God offers us the moſt valuable bleſſings in his Son. II. We here ſee, that when God calls us, it is our duty to receive with readineſs and thankfulneſs the offers he is graciouſly pleaſed to make us; and that inſtead of labouring after that which ſatisfieth not, we ſhould apply all our care to the attainment of true riches. III. The way to obtain theſe is, to hearken to the voice of *Jeſus Chriſt*, whom God has given for our ruler and guide; to ſeek the Lord whilſt he is to be found, to call upon him whilſt he is near us, to turn away from iniquity, and be converted to God. Laſtly, The prophet aſſures us, that by this means we ſhall obtain from God the pardon of our ſins, and the effects of his mercy; and ſhall experience the truth of the promiſes which he has made us in his word.

CHAP. LVI.

I. THE prophet exhorts the *Jews* to the practice of virtue, and particularly to the keeping of the ſabbath. II. He foretels, that ſtrangers, and thoſe who were not admitted to all the privileges of the *Iſraelites*, by the law of *Moſes*, ſhould be admitted into the houſe of God, and offer him their ſacrifices and their prayers; the meaning of which was, that God would receive all people and nations indifferently into his covenant. III. He threatens the *Jews* with deſtruction, and laments the extreme corruption of their rulers.

REFLEC-

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter affords us theſe three inſtructions. I. That what God requires of us, above all things, is to do that which is right, to keep his law, and not to profane his covenant and ſervice. *Iſaiah* teaches us, that this is what God chiefly regards, and that all thoſe who diſcharge theſe duties are accounted his people, whatever their condition be in other reſpects. This point St. *Peter* has perfectly cleared up, when he ſays, *I perceive that God is no reſpecter of perſons; but in every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteouſneſs, is accepted with him.* II. The next reflection relates to the happineſs enjoyed by many nations, who have now the privilege to be admitted into covenant with God, which formerly they were excluded from, and the lively ſenſe of gratitude which we ought to entertain for ſo great a favour conferred on us. Laſtly, Let us conſider the complaints which *Iſaiah* makes againſt the rulers of the *Jews*, whom he calls *blind and ſleepy watchmen*, and *dumb greedy dogs*; to ſignify their unfaithfulneſs in conducting the people, their neglect of duty, and thinking of nothing but their own intereſt, and the gratifying their inclinations. This ſhould ſerve for a warning to thoſe whom God has ſet over his church, as well as to magiſtrates. When ſuch perſons want underſtanding, or zeal, when they are effeminate, careleſs, or addicted to their intereſts or pleaſures, they not only expoſe themſelves to the wrath of God, but alſo bring ruin and deſolation upon the church.

CHAP. LVII.

I. *ISAIAH* reproaches the *Jews* with their ſtupidity and hardneſs of heart, which appeared in their not obſerving, that the death of good men was a preſage of their deſtruction. II. He reproves them for

for continuing to commit their idolatries under trees, and in the high places, notwithſtanding the warnings they had received, and threatenings which God had denounced againſt them; and for ſeeking help from man, inſtead of truſting in God ouly. III. He promiſes, however, that the *Jews* ſhould return from the captivity; he comforts the humble perſons that were among the *Jews*, preaching peace to ſuch; but he declares, that there is no peace for the wicked.

REFLECTIONS.

WE may make theſe four reflections upon this chapter: I. That God often takes good men out of this world, that they may not be involved in the miſeries that are to fall upon the wicked; that when the righteous die, they go into a ſtate of peace and reſt; and that their death is ſometimes followed with many calamities. This they had an inſtance of in good king *Joſiah*, whom God took to himſelf before the deſtruction of the *Jews*. II. That if God complained ſo often of the obſtinacy of the *Jews*, who continued to provoke him by giving themſelves up to idolatry; he will be much more offended with us, if we do not ſerve him faithfully, but forſake him, though we have ſo many reaſons to engage us to fear him, and continue faithful to him. III. We learn, that God dwells in humble and contrite hearts; and therefore if any one deſires to have communion with God, he muſt renounce himſelf, and be lowly in his own ſight. The laſt reflection relates to the ſad condition of the wicked; God declares that there is no peace for them, and that they are in continual trouble and uneaſineſs. This is the uſual ſtate of a guilty conſcience, which the wicked experience ſooner or later; this ought likewiſe to inſpire us with a great averſion to wickedneſs and impiety.

CHAP.

CHAP. LVIII.

GOD commands *Iſaiah* to reprove the *Jews* ſeverely for their ſins, and eſpecially for the hypocriſy of their faſtings: he ſhews what ſort of faſts are acceptable to God; and ſays, the Lord hears, delivers, and bleſſes thoſe that call upon him with ſincerity and humility, and truly turn to him.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter teaches us, what faſts God accepts, and what he rejects. God here declares very expreſsly, that he is offended with the ſervices, and with the faſtings of the wicked; that he has no regard to the humiliation of ſinners, when it is only external and hypocritical, or laſts but a ſhort time; but that the true way of faſting and praying, is to humble ourſelves before God, to afflict our ſouls, to reform our lives, to do juſtice, to repair the evil we have committed, to exerciſe charity, and to ſerve God with fidelity, love, and reverence. The prophet aſſures us, that God never fails to hear and deliver ſuch as pray and faſt after this manner, and to ſhower his bleſſings upon them. Laſtly, He teaches us, that the way to make God propitious, and to enjoy peace and quiet at all times, is to renounce our own wills, to reſign them abſolutely to the will of God, to ſeek all our joy in him alone, to reverence religion, and to place our greateſt happineſs in ſerving God, and honouring his holy name. Let us ſeriouſly reflect upon theſe things at all times, but eſpecially when we preſent ourſelves before God, to perform any of the duties of piety and religion.

CHAP. LIX.

I. THE prophet tells the *Jews*, that if God did not avert the calamities that were to fall upon them, it was not for want of power, but becauſe of their ſins

and corruption, the greatneſs of which he here deſcribes. II. He repreſents the miſeries and calamities with which God would ſhortly puniſh them. III. To theſe threatenings he adds ſuch promiſes as give them reaſon to hope that God would have compaſſion on them, and ſend a deliverer to them that ſhould be converted.

REFLECTIONS.

TO make a good uſe of this chapter the following things are to be obſerved: I. That if God puniſhes men, and leaves them expoſed to ſufferings, it is not for want of power or goodneſs to do good to them, and to deliver them, but their ſins make the ſeparation between God and them. II. That by a ſincere return to God, men may render him propitious, and infallibly recover his favour. III. Great notice is to be taken of the deſcription here given of the corruption of the *Jews*, of the diſorder of their actions and words, of the injuſtice and violence committed among them; and particularly of the prophet's complaint, that good men are very few in number; that no body durſt undertake to defend a righteous cauſe, nor oppoſe the wicked; and that if any one deſired to keep himſelf from evil, he was immediately perſecuted by the wicked. When a nation is arrived to ſuch a pitch of corruption, we may imagine the evil is at its height, and that puniſhment will quickly follow; this appears from the threatnings contained in this chapter, and from that which happened to the *Jews*. As to the promiſes which the Lord here makes of ſending a Redeemer, and of pouring his ſpirit upon his people, it muſt be conſidered, that they principally relate to *Jeſus Chriſt*, who was to be ſent by God for the ſalvation of the *Jews*, and of all men; but they were made only on behalf of ſuch as ſhould be converted from their ſins; and by no means for the hardened and impenitent.

CHAP.

CHAP. LX.

ISAIAH deſcribes the glorious and happy ſtate of the church after its reſtoration: he propheſies, that kings and ſtrange nations, who had afflicted the *Jews*, ſhould honour and protect them; that they ſhould come together from all parts to worſhip the true God, and to be joined to his people, and to enter into covenant with him; and that the church, thus bleſſed by God, ſhould then enjoy perfect happineſs.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS prophecy ſhould be conſidered in three views. I. As it relates to the happy reſtoration of the *Jews*, after the captivity of *Babylon*. That nation was then ſeen aſſembling together from all parts to rebuild *Jeruſalem*, and to increaſe and multiply in it; then it was that ſtrange kings, as *Cyrus*, *Darius*, and *Artaxerxes*, protected the *Jews*, honoured their religion, contributed towards reſtoring the Divine ſervice, and even came ſome of them to pay their homage to the God of *Iſrael*. II. Theſe prophecies are yet more applicable to the Chriſtian church, which has been gathered out of all people, and in which ſo many kings and nations of the earth have placed all their glory, by embracing the ſervice of the true God. Theſe remarkable events, which we are witneſſes of, prove to all the world, that God formerly ſpake by the prophet *Iſaiah*, and that we have great reaſon to acknowledge and admire the power of God, and the faithfulneſs of his promiſes. Laſtly, This prophecy, being taken in its moſt perfect ſenſe, repreſents the moſt glorious ſtate of the church, when the kingdom of God, ſhall be fully manifeſted, and ſhall be received into his glory. This St. *John* teaches us, whan he applies to the heavenly *Jeruſalem* the words we have now read: *And the city had no need of the ſun, neither of the moon to ſhine in it; for the glory of God did lighten it.* Rev. xxi. 23. And ch. xxii. 5. *And the nations of them which are ſaved,*

ſaved, ſhall walk in the light of it; for the Lord giveth them light, and they ſhall reign for ever and ever.

CHAP. LXI.

IN this chapter *Iſaiah*, under the type of the deliverance and reſtoration of the *Jews*, ſpeaks of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, wherewith the Meſſiah was to be inveſted; of the deſign of his coming, and of his miniſtry; which was to be the redemption and ſanctification of his church; and of the joy which the church would then receive.

REFLECTIONS.

IT appears from this chapter, that God was to ſend a great prophet, who was to be filled with the ſpirit of God, to bring glad tidings of ſalvation to men, and deliver them from the ſlavery of ſin; and that by him God would make an everlaſting covenant with them. This prophecy relates to *Jeſus Chriſt*, who is that great prophet who was anointed with the ſpirit of the Lord, to preach the Goſpel to men, to proclaim *liberty to the captives*, and to publiſh the *acceptable year of the Lord*. This appears from the fourth chapter of St. *Luke*, where we are told, that when the Lord read in the ſynagogue of *Nazareth*, this place of the prophet *Iſaiah*, he ſaid, that this prophecy was fulfilled in him. But this ſame prophecy teaches us, that theſe valuable bleſſings are only reſerved for the meek and humble; for thoſe that are broken-hearted, and earneſtly deſire the grace of God. This muſt be the eſtate of thoſe, who expect to ſhare in the bleſſings which *Jeſus Chriſt* has purchaſed for us, and in that joy which the church ſhall experience when its Redeemer cometh.

CHAP. LXII.

THE prophet continues to foretel that God would redeem his church, which, though it ſeemed forſaken of God, ſhould again be in a glorious ſtate, and

no

no more delivered into the hands of its enemies. He propheſies of the coming of the Redeemer, and exhorts men to prepare for his reception.

REFLECTIONS.

IN this chapter we learn, I. That God's love to his church will not ſuffer him to forſake it; that he loveth it as the bridegroom loves his bride, and that it will ever be the object of his care and protection. II. That it is the duty of all thoſe who are concerned for the glory of God, to pray continually for the proſperity of the church. III. God here promiſes to ſend his people a Saviour to redeem them, and place them in a glorious ſtate on earth. The truth of theſe promiſes appeared firſt in the return of the *Jews* from the captivity of *Babylon*, when *Jeruſalem* was rebuilt, and afterwards in the coming of *Jeſus Chriſt* the Saviour of the world, and in the eſtabliſhment of his church. Laſtly, At the hearing of theſe comfortable promiſes we are bound to bleſs God, who has fulfilled them in our behalf, and to endeavour to make ſuitable returns for the happineſs we enjoy of being members of his church, which is his ſpouſe, of being his people, whom he hath redeemed, and for whom he hath prepared a place of glory and happineſs in his kingdom.

CHAP. LXIII.

I. THE prophet deſcribes, in figurative terms, the judgments God would exerciſe upon the enemies of the *Jews*, and in particular, upon the *Edomites*, and upon *Bozrah*, one of their cities. II. He repreſents what God had done for his people, when he delivered them out of *Egypt* by *Moſes*, and at other times; and he complains of their rebellion and ingratitude. III. He adds a prayer, imploring God's mercy on the *Jews*.

REFLEC-

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE deſtruction of the *Edomites*, which happened ſome time after *Iſaiah* had foretold their ruin, is a proof of the truth and divinity of this prediction, as well as of the juſtice of God on thoſe idolatrous nations, who had done great injuries to the kingdom of *Judah*. II. We muſt conſider, that if the prophet gave thanks to God on this occaſion, for the care he had always taken of his people *Iſrael*, we have ſtill more reaſon to bleſs him for the victory which *Jeſus Chriſt* has gained over our ſpiritual enemies, by the ſhedding his blood for us, and by his glorious reſurrection. In this view, we may ſay with *Iſaiah: I will mention the loving-kindneſſes of the Lord, and the praiſes of the Lord, according to all that the Lord has beſtowed on us, and the great goodneſs towards the houſe of Iſrael, which he had beſtowed on them according to his mercies, and according to the multitude of his loving-kindneſſes.* III. When we hear how *Iſaiah* reproached the *Jews* for their ingratitude towards God, and for rebelling againſt him, after ſo many wonders he had done for them and for their fathers; we ſhould call to mind what God hath done for us, and ſhould give better proof of our gratitude than the *Jews* did. IV. There are two things to be remarked in the prayer at the end of this chapter. One is, that as *Iſaiah* beſeeched God to have compaſſion on *Jeruſalem* for the glory of his name, notwithſtanding the unworthineſs of the *Jews*; ſo the mercy of God, and the ſtability of his covenant and promiſes, ſhould be the foundation of all our confidence. The other remark is, that theſe words, *O Lord, why haſt thou made us to err from thy ways, and hardened our heart from thy fear?* do not imply, that God was the cauſe and author of the wickedneſs of the *Jews*; they mean only that God ſeeing their obſtinacy and wilful hardneſs of heart, had ſuffered them to go aſtray, and in juſt judgment upon them had left them to themſelves.

CHAP.

CHAP. LXIV.

A PRAYER, wherein the prophet beſeeches God to manifeſt his glory and majeſty in the ſight of all men; and, for the deliverance of his people, to work miracles in their behalf, like thoſe he had formerly wrought for them. He then intreats him not to remember their ſins, and to pity the deplorable ſtate *Jeruſalem* and the temple were going to be reduced to by the *Babylonians*.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE deſcription in this chapter of God's ſovereign power, and the proofs he formerly gave of it, ſhould induce us to reverence and fear that Almighty Being, whoſe power none can reſiſt, who has, in all ages, done ſo great things for the deliverance of thoſe that truſt in him, and has always made the wicked feel the effects of his juſtice. II. As *Iſaiah* formerly prayed for the deliverance of the *Jews*, all thoſe who love God and his church, ſhould, without ceaſing, offer up devout prayers in its behalf, and beſeech him, above all, to diſplay his power and ſtrength in its ſanctification, to extend it throughout all the earth, and to manifeſt himſelf to thoſe that know him not. And as the prophet, interceding for the *Jews*, acknowledged they were guilty and defiled, and yet beſought God to pity their ſad condition, and to remember they were his people, and the work of his hands; ſo we ought to offer up our prayers to God, with profound humility, and a ſincere acknowledgement of our own ſins and unworthineſs, and to place all our hopes in his mercy only, in the promiſes he has given, and the covenant he has made with us in *Jeſus Chriſt* our Lord.

CHAP. LXV.

I. THE Lord declares, that he would call the Gentiles to the knowledge of himſelf, and caſt off the *Jews*, becauſe of their rebellion, and particularly

for the idolatry with which they were defiled. II. Nevertheleſs, he foretels that *Jeruſalem* ſhould be rebuilt, that the *Jews* ſhould dwell in their own land, that the cattle ſhould feed upon *Sharon* and *Achor*, which were fruitful paſtures; and that God ſhould heap his bleſſings upon them, whilſt the rebellious and idolatrous *Jews* were abandoned to his vengeance. Laſtly, God promiſes to create new heavens and a new earth, and to cauſe righteouſneſs and peace to reign among them.

REFLECTIONS.

I. GOD here promiſes to make himſelf known to thoſe who ſought him not, and to a people that did not call upon his name. This prophecy expreſsly denotes, that God would make himſelf known to the heathen; as St. *Paul* ſhews, when he cites theſe words in the Epiſtle to the *Romans*. II. God threatens to reject the *Jews*, becauſe they had provoked him by their idolatry, and continual diſobedience. This threatening was put in execution, when *Jeruſalem* fell under the power of the *Babylonians*, and the *Jews* were carried into captivity. So ſevere a puniſhment ſhould make rebellious and ungrateful Chriſtians dread the moſt ſevere effects of the Divine vengeance. III. This chapter inſtructs us, that God in the execution of his judgments, always makes a difference between the wicked and his faithful ſervants; and that the wicked have nothing but ſhame and grief for their portion. IV. It is here foretold, that *God would create new heavens, and a new earth; and that the wolf and the lamb ſhould feed together;* which ſignifies not only that God was going to alter the ſtate of *Jeruſalem* and of the *Jews*, by delivering them from captivity, and reſtoring peace; but that God would ſoon renew the world, and re-unite all men in his church. This renovation of all things began with the preaching of the Goſpel, and will be ſtill more fully compleated in the latter days. Upon this the apoſtle teaches us, that ſince *all things are become new, and we look for*

new

new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteouſneſs, we ought to be new creatures, and ſtudy to be without ſpot, and blameleſs. Laſtly, From hence it appears, that Chriſt's deſign was to re-unite all men in his church, and to make them live in unity and concord; and therefore that his kingdom is a kingdom of peace, that Chriſtians ought not to hurt one another, and that their character ſhould be mutual love, peace, forbearance, and charity.

CHAP. LXVI.

I. GOD declares in an extremely affecting manner, that he rejected the ſacrifices and external worſhip of the *Jews*; and that he would ſoon ſeverely puniſh their hypocriſy and diſobedience, II. He promiſes to reſtore peace to *Jeruſalem*, to give it many children, to heap his bleſſings upon it, and, above all, to ſanctify it; and threatens the wicked with eternal ruin.

REFLECTIONS.

THE firſt part of this chapter teaches us, I. That God, being the creator of the world, dwells not in temples made with hands; that he is not honoured by a worſhip that is merely external; that he accepts none but thoſe that can come to him with an humble ſpirit, and who tremble at his word; and that without theſe diſpoſitions, all acts of divine worſhip, even thoſe he has eſtabliſhed and commanded, ſuch as were under the law, ſacrifices of ſheep and oxen, oblations and incenſe, are ſo far from pleaſing him, that they become an abomination to him. II. The promiſes which God made to redeem his people, to multiply them, and to pour down his bleſſings upon them, were all accompliſhed, when the *Jews* were gathered from the ſeveral countries of the world to *Jeruſalem*, and the divine worſhip reſtored. But theſe promiſes eſpecially declare, that the Gentiles ſhould enter into the church of Chriſt, which alſo came to paſs. Herein we ſhould

ſhould acknowledge the truth and faithfulneſs of God, as well as his mercy towards us. However, we muſt likewiſe carefully remember, that God declares ſeveral times in this chapter, that theſe promiſes, and theſe bleſſings, are only for the faithful and elect; and that he would diſplay his vengeance upon the wicked and unbelieving. From whence it appears, that it is only by faith and obedience, that we can be made partakers of that ſalvation and glory, which *Iſaiah* and the other prophets have promiſed, and which have been purchaſed for us by *Jeſus Chriſt*, to whom be praiſe and adoration for ever and ever. *Amen.*

The end of the Book of the Prophet ISAIAH.

THE

BOOK

OF THE PROPHET

JEREMIAH.

ARGUMENT.

Jeremiah, *who was a prieſt and prophet, propheſied from the* 13*th year of king* Joſiah, *till after the taking of* Jeruſalem, *which was about the ſpace of* 45 *years. This book is writ with a great deal of plainneſs and at the ſame time with great ſtrength and energy. It is partly hiſtorical and partly prophetical. We meet with ſeveral prophecies in it concerning the ruin of the* Jews, *their return from the captivity, the deſtruction of the* Babylonians, *and of ſome other kingdoms; the calling of the Gentiles, and the new covenant that God would make with mankind by* Jeſus Chriſt. *We have here likewiſe a relation of the ſufferings* Jeremiah *himſelf underwent, and of ſeveral things that happened to him before, and after the taking of* Jeruſalem; *as alſo an account of what paſſed during the ſiege and taking of that city, and of the ſtate of the* Jews *that dwelt in* Judea, *and who retired into* Egypt, *after that* Jeruſalem *was taken by the* Chaldeans.

CHAP.

CHAP. I.

THIS chapter conſiſts of three parts. I. *Jeremiah* gives an account in what manner he was called to the office of a prophet, the reaſons he gave to be excuſed from it, and God's command to obey his call. II. *Jeremiah* relates two viſions which he ſaw; the firſt of which was, the viſion of an almond-tree beginning to bud, which ſignified that the deſtruction of *Jeruſalem* was near; and the ſecond, which was a ſeething pot towards the north, ſhewed, that this deſolation would come from the north, that is, from *Babylon*. III. We here ſee the promiſes God gave *Jeremiah* of his aſſiſtance and protection.

REFLECTIONS *after reading the chapter.*

I. LET us make one general reflection on this Book, which is, that God, in his great goodneſs, ſent *Jeremiah* to the *Jews* to exhort them to repentance, and to warn them of their approaching deſtruction. II. It muſt be remarked, that *Jeremiah* was called to be a prophet when he was yet young; that at firſt he was afraid to take this office upon him, and would have excuſed himſelf from it, but that, when God commanded him, he obeyed the call. From whence it appears, that *Jeremiah* did not take this office upon himſelf of his own choice, but in obedience to the will of God, and with profound humility. As it is God alone who is to ſend his miniſters, ſo thoſe whom he calls ought to be ſenſible of their weakneſs; but they ought nevertheleſs, to obey his voice, and to rely upon his aſſiſtance. The two viſions of *Jeremiah* gave him to underſtand, that the chief deſign of his miniſtry was, to denounce the approaching ruin of *Jeruſalem*. Thus the ſervants of God are ſent, not only to deliver promiſes to men, but very often threatnings, to warn them of the judgments of God. Laſtly, the command of God to the prophet to acquaint the *Jews* with all that he ſhould command him, promiſing to ſupport him

againſt all that ſhould oppoſe him, ſhews, that the miniſters of the Lord are bound to diſcharge their office without fearing men, and courageouſly to declare the whole will of God; and that God always ſupports them that faithfully diſcharge the duties of their calling.

CHAP. II.

THERE are three things to be conſidered in this chapter: I. God, under the ſimilitude of a huſband, who has a tender affection for his wife, repreſents his own love to the *Jews*, and the many good things he had done for them in the land of *Canaan*. II. He complains of the ungrateful returns which the *Jews* had made to ſo much love, and for ſo many favours; that the people, and even the prieſts, the kings, and the rulers, had carried their rebellions ſo far, as to forſake the Lord to ſerve falſe gods, which the prophet reproaches them for very largely. III. God tells them, that this their ingratitude and idolatry, would be the cauſe of their deſtruction, and that he would puniſh them, by delivering them into the hands of their enemies; that neither *Noph*, nor *Tahapanes*, that is, the *Egyptians*, nor the *Aſſyrians*, in whom they truſted, ſhould deliver them; and that God would make uſe of theſe very nations to chaſtiſe them.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter engages us to reflect upon the love of God towards the *Jews*, upon their ingratitude, and their deſtruction. I. Upon the firſt of theſe we ſhould reflect, that if God thus loved the *Jews*, and did ſuch great things for them, he has manifeſted to us ſtill greater love, and beſtowed much more valuable bleſſings upon us, than thoſe which he vouchſafed to his ancient people. II. God reproaches the *Jews* with falling into the baſeſt ingratitude againſt him, and forſaking his worſhip, to commit the moſt abominable idolatries. This is expreſſed in the following complaint which God makes: *What iniquity have your fathers*

fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me, and have walked after vanity, and are become vain? Neither have they ſaid, Where is the Lord that hath brought us up out of the land of Egypt? Be aſtoniſhed, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, for my people have forſaken me, who am the fountain of living waters; to hew them out broken ciſterns that can hold no water. By this God very plainly ſhews, that he is man's ſovereign good; that he ceaſeth not to draw men to him by his kindneſs; that it is extreme ingratitude and folly thus to turn away from God, who is the fountain of all their happineſs, and cleave to vain things which cannot make them happy; that thoſe who behave thus have no excuſe to plead, and are of neceſſity miſerable, as the *Jews* experienced. III. We ſee that the *Jews*, for their unfaithfulneſs to God, were deprived of his protection, and drew upon themſelves all thoſe miſeries which *Jeremiah* threatened them with. Thus all thoſe who forſake God, who abuſe his long ſuffering, and are inſenſible both of his mercies and judgments, periſh at laſt in a miſerable manner.

CHAP. III.

I. *JEREMIAH* here repreſents, under the ſimilitude of a woman that had committed adultery, the crime of the *Jews* in forſaking the ſervice of God, and breaking his covenant; and continuing the ſame compariſon, he ſpeaks of *Iſrael* and *Judah*, as of two ſiſters that had both fallen into the ſin of adultery: The meaning of which is, that the *Iſraelites* of the ten tribes had firſt forſaken God to ſerve idols; and that thoſe of the kingdom of *Judah* had imitated, and even exceeded them by their ſins and obſtinacy. II. God declares, that notwithſtanding the unfaithfulneſs of that people, he was nevertheleſs ſtill ready to forgive them upon their converſion. III. He promiſes, that, after he had diſperſed the people of *Iſrael* and *Judah*, he would one day gather them together, and that then they ſhould ſerve him faithfully.

REFLEC-

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE compariſon that *Jeremiah* makes of the idolatrous *Jews* with an idolatrous woman, repreſents the ſin and perfidiouſneſs of Chriſtians, who do not obſerve towards God the fidelity they owe him, who break the covenant they have made with him, and return his loving kindneſs with nothing but ingratitude and rebellion. II. We here ſee that the *Jews* of *Jeruſalem*, and of the kingdom of *Judah*, who ought to have been more firmly attached to the pure worſhip of God, ſince they had his ſervice ſettled among them, and had likewiſe before their eyes the example of their brethren of the ten tribes, who had lately been deſtroyed, did notwithſtanding imitate and even exceed them in their idolatry. It ſometimes happens, that they who have received the greateſt favours from God abuſe them, and thereby render themſelves more guilty than thoſe who have not enjoyed the ſame privileges. III. God declares, that he was ſtill willing to pardon the *Jews*, notwithſtanding their infidelity: *Return*, ſays he, *ye backſliding children, and I will heal your backſlidings.* God does not caſt off thoſe who have moſt offended him; he ſtill preſerves a favourable inclination towards them; he makes them proffers of mercy, and exhorts them to turn again to him. Laſtly, It is to be obſerved, that the promiſe which God made to gather together the people of *Iſrael* and *Judah*, was in ſome ſort accomplithed, when the *Jews* returned from the captivity of *Babylon*; but ſince that deliverance concerned properly only thoſe of *Judah*, and that the greateſt part of *Iſrael* remained ſtill diſperſed; theſe promiſes extend to the times of the Goſpel, when theſe two people were to be united again in the Chriſtian church; and they will be fully accomplithed, when the *Jewiſh* nation ſhall be converted.

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

I. GOD aſſures the *Jews*, that if they would be converted, he would have compaſſion on them. II. He threatens them, that if they continued in their rebellions, they ſhould be ſubdued by the *Chaldeans*; and the prophet, by the compariſon of a lion ſeeking his prey, of a ſtrong wind which breaks and roots up all before it, and of a woman in travel, repreſents how terrible the coming of the *Chaldeans* would be, and the miſerable condition to which *Jeruſalem*, and all *Judea* would be reduced.

REFLECTIONS.

THE promiſes of pardon which God made to the *Jews*, if they would turn to him, teach us, how good and gracious the Lord is, and that the door of his mercy is open, even to thoſe who have moſt offended him, provided they truly turn to him, and repent of their ſins. But the ſevere threatenings that God joins to his promiſes, ſhew us, that he is righteous as well as merciful, and that they who obſtinately perſiſt in their ſins, have nothing to hope from him. This we may learn by what befel the *Jews*. The prophet's deſcription, in this chapter, of the miſeries which were ſhortly to fall upon *Judea*, and of the deſolation that would be occaſioned by the *Chaldeans* in that country, is a picture of what happened to that people ſome years after, and may ſerve as an inſtance to convince us of the certainty of the divine threatenings, and the ſeverity of God's judgments.

CHAP. V.

I. *JEREMIAH* complains, that the wickedneſs of *Jeruſalem* was ſo general, that there could hardly be found one good man in the city; He ſays, that the *Jews* were inſenſible under the divine corrections; that the mean and great were equally hardened; and that

all

all had abandoned themſelves to idolatry, to adultery, and all ſorts of ſins. II. He denounces the divine vengeance againſt the *Jews* for theſe ſins; and though that people, ſeduced by falſe prophets, flattered themſelves with peace, he declares, that the *Chaldeans* would quickly come againſt *Jeruſalem*, but that nevertheleſs God would not utterly deſtroy his people. Laſtly, The prophet exhorts the *Jews* to fear Almighty God, and to repent; he reproaches them with their blindneſs, their injuſtice, and other crimes; and complains eſpecially, that the prieſts and the prophets were as corrupt as the people.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter contains very important inſtructions. We ſee here, I. How we may diſcover when a nation is extremely corrupt; which is certainly the caſe when the number of good men in it is very ſmall; when the great men, and the rulers of the people, have forſaken the Lord, as well as the meaneſt; when impurity and injuſtice reign without oppoſition: when men have neither a grateful ſenſe of the kindneſſes of the Lord, nor dread his threatenings; and laſtly, when the miniſters whom God has appointed, inſtead of oppoſing the evil, follow the general corruption, countenance and encourage it, which the prophet calls *an amazing and horrible thing*. II. It is to be obſerved, that when the *Jews* were thus ſunk in wickedneſs, they did not believe the words, nor dread the threatenings of the prophet, but flattered themſelves in their wickedneſs, being perſuaded that no harm would happen to them. Such is the blindneſs of men; they live in ſecurity, and dread not the judgments of God, even when they are moſt threatened. However, God at laſt executes his threatenings, as theſe words expreſs, which are more than once repeated by *Jeremiah*: *Shall I not viſit for theſe things? ſaith the Lord: and ſhall not my ſoul be avenged on ſuch a nation as this?* Laſtly, The reaſons which the *Jews* had to dread the Almighty,

ſo ſtrongly repreſented in this chapter, and the blindneſs of that people, ought to be well conſidered. This teaches us that it is ſtrange ſtupidity in men not to fear that great God whoſe power is unbounded, who is Lord of the univerſe, and poureth his benefits upon them, ſending rain from heaven, and fruitful ſeaſons. By this means they expoſe themſelves to his wrath, and deprive themſelves of the effects of his mercy, ſince, as God ſays, *The iniquities of men turn away his favours, and withhold good things from them.*

CHAP. VI.

JEREMIAH declares, that God would ſhortly bring a nation from the north againſt *Jeruſalem*, meaning the *Chaldeans*, who were in a few years to beſiege and take that city, and to carry the *Jews* into captivity. God exhorts the *Jews* to repentance, aſſuring them, that he ſtill loved them, but that the true cauſe of their deſtruction would be their impenitence, their incurable obſtinacy, and the general corruption that reigned among them; their abandoning themſelves to ſins of every kind; and, above all, the ſins of the prieſts and the prophets, and their contempt of the divine threatenings and remonſtrances. III. The Lord declares that the offerings, ſacrifices, and all the external worſhip of the *Jews*, ſhould not ſcreen them from their ruin, and even that thoſe things ſhould rather haſten it, and make it more dreadful.

REFLECTIONS.

WE muſt here obſerve, I. God's goodneſs and extreme tenderneſs, in warning men of the miſeries that threaten them, and exhorting them to prevent their deſtruction by repentance. This goodneſs of the Lord appears in theſe remarkable words: *Be thou inſtructed, O Jeruſalem, leſt my ſoul depart from thee.* II. The ſevere threatenings added to theſe exhortations, teach us, that how great ſoever God's patience and loving-kindneſs is when it has been long deſpiſed, it gives place

place to his wrath. This the *Jews* experienced a ſhort time after theſe threatenings were denounced againſt them by *Jeremiah*. III. From this chapter we may collect, that men moſt provoke God's wrath, when they give up themſelves in ſuch a manner to evil, that they ſin without ſhame or reſtraint; when they know not how to bluſh: when they diſregard the exhortation of the miniſters of the Lord; when God's miniſters themſelves live looſe and diſorderly lives, and when the rich and poor are alike corrupt. Laſtly, It appears from this chapter, that while the Jews were filling up the meaſure of their iniquities, they ſtill continued to offer to God incenſe and ſacrifice; but that God rejected all the worſhip they pretended to pay him, and prepared a ſevere ſcourge for them. The wicked and ungodly ſometimes perform the external duties of religion; but all the worſhip of men who fear not God, far from procuring his favour, only tends to provoke his wrath the more.

CHAP. VII.

I. THIS chapter contains a grave and ſolemn reproof of the *Jews* for their ſins, and eſpecially for their hypocriſy and vain confidence, and for profaning the temple and the ſervice of God. *Jeremiah* threatens them, that God would treat *Jeruſalem*, and the temple as he had treated *Shiloh*, where the tabernacle formerly was, and as he had treated their brethren of *Ephraim*, that is, the *Iſraelites* of the ten tribes, who had been deſtroyed by the *Aſſyrians*. II. God forbids *Jeremiah* to intercede for the *Jews*; he ſays, it is in vain for them to offer ſacrifices, whilſt they gave themſelves up to all kinds of ſins, and worſhiped idols, particularly *Moloch* and the queen of heaven, that is to ſay, the Moon. God declares, that for theſe ſins the carcaſes of the *Jews* ſhould be without burial, caſt into the valley of *Tophet*, which was a place near *Jeruſalem*, where the idolatrous *Jews* had offered their children to idols, making them paſs through

through the fire. This chapter demands great attention.

REFLECTIONS.

THE grave remonſtrances which *Jeremiah* addreſſed to the *Jews*, engage us to make the following reflections: I. That it is in vain for the wicked to glory in being members of the church, and to pay public worſhip to God, while they break his laws; that thoſe who think to pleaſe God, by coming into his houſe, and performing acts of divine worſhip, and are at the ſame time unrighteous, unclean, impious, and hypocrites, decieve themſelves, and turn the houſe of God into a den of thieves; and that the only means to obtain the favour of God, is to reform ourſelves, and to do that which is right. II. Let us conſider, that God, provoked with the ſins of the *Jews*, threatens to treat them with the utmoſt ſeverity, to deſtroy them and their temple, and forſake them, as he had done *Shiloh* in the days of *Samuel* the prophet, and afterwards the kingdom of the ten tribes. Let us grow wiſe by their example, as well as by the example of thoſe chriſtian churches, whoſe candleſtick, that is the light of God's word, has been removed from them becauſe they abuſed it. III. We learn, by God's forbidding *Jeremiah* to pray for the *Jews*, that when the anger of God is kindled againſt a people by their incurable obſtinacy, the prayers even of the righteous cannot appeaſe it. Theſe words are very remarkable; *Do they provoke me to anger? ſaith the Lord: Do they not provoke themſelves to the confuſion of their own faces?* All that men do againſt God, when they offend him, cannot hurt him, but turns to their own confuſion and great miſery; and therefore it is only to prevent them from deſtroying themſelves, that God is ſo kind to warn them of their danger. Laſtly, We muſt take notice of the terrible and juſt vengeance of God, upon the crimes and idolatries of the *Jews*, in deſtroying their city, and in

cauſing their carcaſes to be expoſed in the very place where they had exerciſed their abominable idolatries. All theſe conſideretions ought to produce in our hearts a wholeſome dread of the judgments of God, and ſhould effectually move us to fear and ſerve him with ſincerity.

CHAP. VIII.

THIS chapter has three parts. I. *Jeremiah* foretels, that the *Jews*, and even of the chief men among them, ſhould be caſt out, and their dead bodies taken out of their graves, and expoſed to the ſun, and moon, and the ſtars, which they had worſhipped; and that the condition of the reſt of the *Jews* ſhould be ſo deplorable, that they would chuſe death rather than life. II. the prophet ſhews the cauſe of all theſe calamities, which was the extreme hardneſs of that people, who would not be converted, notwithſtanding the warnings God gave them; and particularly, the impiety of the teachers of the law, of the prieſts and prophets. Laſtly he deſcribes the deſolation which the *Babylonians* were quickly to bring upon *Jeruſalem* and all *Judea*.

REFLECTIONS.

HERE are theſe four reflections to be made. I. The firſt is, that *Jeremiah* foretold of the *Jews*, that their bones ſhould be ſpread before the ſun, and before the ſtars, which they had worſhipped; and that ſuch as lived at the time of their deſtruction, ſhould wiſh for death rather than life. Herein we obſerve the dreadful, but juſt judgments of God upon that people, who had given up themſelves to the ſin of idolatry. The puniſhment of ſinners bears uſually ſome reſemblance to the ſins they have committed. II. The next reflection is drawn from that complaint of the prophet. *Shall they fall, and not riſe? Shall he turn away, and not return? Why then is this people of Jeruſalem ſlidden back, by a perpetual backſliding?*

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Were they aſhamed when they had committed abomination? Nay they were not aſhamed, neither could they bluſh. This teaches us, that when men are impenitent, and are no longer aſhamed of their evil deeds, it is a ſign their obſtinacy is deſperate, and their puniſhment at hand. III. God's frequent and earneſt complaints of the hypocriſy and infidelity of the prieſts and of the prophets, ſhew how much God is offended, and what great evils threaten thoſe who have the care of the church, and neglect the duties of their functions, and diſgrace the ſanctity of their character by a profane and irregular life. Laſtly, Let us conſider, that God, who brought ſo many calamities upon *Judea*, and expoſed that country to the moſt cruel and mercileſs enemies, may ſtill puniſh guilty people and churches after the ſame manner; but, if he does not puniſh offenders with temporal calamities, they ſhall not, for that reaſon, eſcape the rigour of his juſtice; for there are other puniſhments much more dreadful than any which *Jeremiah* in this chapter denounced againſt the *Jews*.

CHAP. IX.

I. *JEREMIAH* laments the deſtruction of the *Jews*, and their great ſins, ſuch as adultery, lying, deceit, cruelty, and the like. II. The prophet ſays, that *Jeruſalem*, and all the land of *Judah*, would be reduced to a wilderneſs, and to a moſt deplorable condition, becauſe the *Jews* had forſaken the law and the ſervice of God; and he exhorts the inhabitants of the land, to bewail the calamities that were ready to fall upon them. Laſtly, He declares to them, that neither their wiſdom nor ſtrength, nor their boaſted privilege of circumciſion, ſhould ſecure them againſt the evils which threatened them; and that they would be treated as the neighbouring nations.

REFLECTIONS.

ON this chapter it muſt be conſidered, I. That as *Jeremiah* formerly lamented and bewailed the ſins of the *Jews*, and their deſolation, ſo all thoſe who fear God, and eſpecially his true miniſters, are affected with a bitter grief at the ſight of mens ſins, and at the calamities which thoſe ſins bring upon them. II. We ſee in this chapter, that the *Jews* had let themſelves looſe to all manner of iniquity; that diſſimulation, fraud, and perfidiouſneſs, reigned among them to ſuch a degree, that no man could be truſted, not even the neareſt relations; that they gave themſelves up to adultery and to uncleanneſs; and that there was ſcarce any more knowledge or fear of God in *Jeruſalem*. When mens corruption is grown to ſuch an height as this, a nation cannot long remain unpuniſhed. This drew upon the *Jews* the utmoſt effects of God's wrath, as theſe words declare: *Who is the wiſe man that may underſtand this, and who is he to whom the mouth of the Lord hath ſpoken, that he may declare it, for what the land periſheth, and is burnt up like a wilderneſs, that none paſſeth through? And the Lord ſaid, Becauſe they have forſaken my law, which I ſet before them, and have not obeyed my voice, neither walked therein: but have walked after the imagination of their own heart.* III. The concluſion of this chapter teaches us, that we ought not to boaſt in our own wiſdom, or ſtrength, nor even in the outward marks of the divine covenant; but that we ought to glory only in knowing and fearing God, as theſe words of *Jeremiah* import, which are quoted by St. *Paul*, 1 Cor. i. and 2 Cor. x. *Let not the wiſe man glory in his wiſdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches; But let him that glorieth, glory in this, that he underſtandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord.*

CHAP.

CHAP. X.

IN this chapter *Jeremiah* exhorts the *Jews* not to imitate the folly of thoſe that worſhipped the ſtars, and that ſerved idols which they themſelves had made. To the vanity of idols he oppoſes the majeſty of the ſupreme God, who is the Creator and Lord of the univerſe; and to the ſtupidity of idolaters, he oppoſes the happineſs of the children of *Iſrael* in knowing the true God, and being in covenant with him. Next, he foretels that the *Jews* were going to be reduced to extreme miſery, for having abandoned themſelves to idolatry; nevertheleſs, he beſeeches the Lord not to chaſtiſe them in his wrath, nor to deſtroy them utterly.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter treats of the idolatry of the heathens. I. Here we ſee expoſed the madneſs of thoſe who adored the ſtars of heaven, and idols of wood, gold, or ſilver, made by mens hands, and which, being without ſenſe or life, were incapable of doing either good or hurt. All this *Jeremiah* repreſented to the *Jews*, to inſpire them with an abhorrence of idolotry, to convince them of their great guilt in falling into it, and to prevent them from running into it, when they were diſperſed among the idolatrous nations. Theſe reflections engage us to praiſe God for giving us the knowledge of himſelf; and ſhould keep us, not only from idolatry, but from every thing that has the leaſt tendency towards it, and from all ſuperſtitions and vain notions and practices. II. The compariſon here made between the impotence and vanity of idols, and the majeſty of the Almighty God, who created heaven and earth, and governs it, ſhould inſpire us with ſentiments of fear and reverence for that great God; and lead us to ſay with *Jeremiah*, *There is none like unto thee, O Lord; thou art great, and thy name is great in might. Who would not fear*

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thee, O king of nations? For to thee doth it appertain. III. We here ſee, that the *Jews* were brought to deſolation by the *Babylonians*, becauſe they forſook the ſervice of God, and the allegiance they owed him. So ſevere a puniſhment proves, that the wrath of God overtakes thoſe, who, after having known God, do not glorify him as God. Laſtly, We may gather from the laſt words of this chapter, that God chaſtiſes men becauſe his chaſtiſements are needful for them, but does not do it for their deſtruction; therefore we ought humbly to ſubmit ourſelves to the chaſtening diſpenſations of Providence, and uſe this prayer of the prophet; *O Lord, correct me, but with judgment; not in thine anger, leſt thou bring me to nothing.*

CHAP. XI.

I. GOD ſets before the *Jews* the covenant he had made with them when their fathers came out of *Egypt*, and reproaches them for having obſtinately broken it by their ſins, and eſpecially by idolatry. II. He tells them, that to puniſh them he would viſit them with his rod, and forbids *Jeremiah* to pray for them. III. The prophet complains of the inhabitants of *Anathoth*, which was the city where *Jeremiah* dwelt, becauſe they would have hindered him from ſpeaking to them, and would even have taken away his life.

REFLECTIONS.

THE firſt inſtruction which this chapter affords us, is taken from the curſe which God denounces againſt thoſe who keep not his covenant. Let us reflect on this a little, and remember, that God has made a more excellent covenant with us than with the *Jews*; that this new covenant engages us ſtill more ſtrictly to hear his voice, and to do all that he hath commanded us; wherefore if we break it, we ſhall incur a much heavier puniſhment. We ought to conſider farther, that it is not only by worſhipping idols, that the

the divine covenant is broken; but that this may be done likewiſe, by breaking the vows which we have made to God, and by withdrawing our hearts from him to give them to the world. God complains in this chapter, that the inhabitants of *Jeruſalem* had conſpired againſt him, and were incurably built upon evil; which ſo highly provoked God againſt them, that he forbad *Jeremiah* even to pray for them. This teaches us, that when the wickedneſs of men is come to its full height, when they agree in nothing elſe but in provoking the Lord, and when his laws are generally deſpiſed, he ſpares them no longer, and even the prayers of the righteous become uſeleſs. Laſtly, We ſhould conſider well the threatenings denounced in this chapter againſt the *Jews*, and in particular againſt the inhabitants of *Anathoth*, who would have hindered *Jeremiah* from propheſying in the name of the Lord, and would have taken away his life too. It is a very great ſin to reject the word of the Lord, to refuſe to hear his faithful ſervants, and even attempt to ſtop their mouths; and God will call thoſe churches and people, who are guilty of this ſin, to a ſevere account. However, the miniſters of the Lord, in imitation of *Jeremiah*, ought neither to be provoked nor diſcouraged, when they meet with the like oppoſition.

CHAP. XII.

I. *JEREMIAH* aſks of God, why the wicked *Jews*, who reject his miniſtry, ſtill enjoyed proſperity. The Lord anſwers, that he muſt prepare to meet with ſtill greater oppoſition at *Jeruſalem;* but that he ſhould ſee the accompliſhment of his threatenings; and that this people ſhould ſoon be forſaken, and carried captive into a ſtrange country: from whence, however, he would bring them back again. II. God declares, that he would likewiſe puniſh the neighbouring nations, becauſe of the evils they had done his people; but if theſe nations embraced the

worſhip of the true God, they alſo ſhould be eſteemed his people.

REFLECTIONS.

WHAT we are to conſider upon this chapter is, I. Never to believe that the wicked and the hypocrites ſhall eſcape unpuniſhed, or that they are truly happy becauſe God ſpares them for a while; nor that the threatenings of God are leſs ſure, becauſe he defers the execution of them. II. That the ſervants of God ought not to be diſcouraged, though they ſhould be expoſed to the gainſaying, and the ſcoffs of the wicked; nay, that thoſe who are reſolved to diſcharge their duty with integrity, have reaſon to expect it. III. That the threatenings of the Lord have, ſoon or late, their effect; and that neither the covenant of God, nor the love he has ſhewn to any nation, can ſecure it from his anger, when he has been provoked to it by repeated inſtances of rebellion; as we are taught by theſe remarkable expreſſions: *I have forſaken mine houſe, I have left mine heritage, I have given the dearly-beloved of my ſoul into the hands of her enemies.* IV. God revealed his purpoſe, firſt to chaſtiſe his own people, and afterwards the neighbouring nations, and even to receive thoſe idolatrous nations into covenant with him. By this we may ſee that God is juſt and merciful; that he has no reſpect of perſons, and regards only integrity and uprightneſs. This appears evidently in the calling of the Gentiles, after the coming of our Lord *Jeſus Chriſt.*

CHAP. XIII.

I. THE prophet repreſents to the *Jews*, by the figure of a rotten girdle, which was good for nothing, that the covenant they had made with God was going to be broken, and that he would reject them, becauſe they had forſaken him. II. He exhorts all the people, and particularly the king, and the great men, to humble themſelves before this deſtruction came upon them.

them. III. He laments their deſtruction, and declares, that their invincible obſtinacy would bring it upon them.

REFLECTIONS.

THE inſtructions which this chapter affords us, are theſe: I. That our covenant with God procures us very great advantages, and unites us to him in the ſtricteſt manner; but if we break it, as the *Jews* did, it will become unprofitable to us. II. That when God cauſes us to hear his threatenings, we ſhould humble ourſelves; and as the great are commonly the chief authors of the corruption of the people, and of the miſeries conſequent to it, it is but reaſonable they ſhould, by their humiliation, endeavour to avert the wrath of God. This is the reflection we ſhould make on the exhortation which *Jeremiah* addreſſes, not only to the people, but to the king and queen, to give glory to God, and to humble themſelves before the darkneſs came upon them. III. The tears which *Jeremiah* ſhed on account of the obſtinacy of the *Jews*, and the miſeries that were to come upon them, ſhew, that when mens obſtinacy is paſt remedy, good men, and particularly the miniſters of God, can do nothing more than ſigh and bewail the wretched condition of thoſe that periſh. IV. Theſe words, *Can the Ethiopian change his ſkin, or the leopard his ſpots? Then may ye alſo do good, that are accuſtomed to do evil;* deſerve to be well conſidered, as they deſcribe the ſtrange perverſeneſs of the *Jews*, and teach us, that by reſiſting the grace of God, and by an habitual courſe of ſin, men arrive to that degree of corruption, that it is hard to recover them from it, and many never do recover.

CHAP. XIV.

THE prophecy contained in this chapter was occaſioned by a great drought which God had afflicted *Judea* with, and which *Jeremiah* here deſcribes. To

appeaſe the wrath of God in that time of trouble, and to obtain rain, the prophet intercedes for the people: but God tells him, that his prayers were in vain, as well as the prayers and faſtings of the *Jews*; that they would ſhortly be extirpated by all ſorts of plagues; and that thoſe falſe prophets, who had promiſed them peace, ſhould be confounded, and involved in the general ruin. Nevertheleſs, *Jeremiah* beſeeches God to pardon the *Jews*, and not to caſt them off entirely in this extremity.

REFLECTIONS.

FROM this chapter we are to learn theſe four things: I. That, as God ſent a drought and famine upon *Judea*, to ſignify to the *Jews* that they had provoked him, and that he ſhould quickly come to deſtroy them, ſo we ought to conſider all temporal calamities as tokens of the wrath of God, and incitements to repentance. II. That it is the duty of thoſe who are ſet over the church, and of all its true members, to labour by their prayers, as *Jeremiah* did, to prevent and avert the judgments of God; or at leaſt to moderate them, if they cannot be wholly averted. III. That neither the zeal and interceſſion of the righteous, nor the prayers and faſtings of an obſtinate and impenitent people, can prevent the divine vengeance. This the Lord humbly teaches us, when he tells the prophet: *Pray not for this people for their good. When they faſt, I will not hear their cry.* And when he declares that the *Jews*, ſhould be conſumed, not only by drought and famine, but likewiſe by war and peſtilence. Laſtly, The miniſters of the Lord ought ſeriouſly to reflect upon what is here ſaid, of the crime and puniſhment of thoſe falſe prophets, who promiſed peace to the *Jews*, at the very time their ruin was approaching; that it may be a warning to them never to flatter ſinners, nor lull them in ſecurity; but to ſpeak always with zeal and ſincerity what God has commanded them. We ought likewiſe to learn from

from hence, to hearken to thoſe that declare the truth to us ſincerely and without flattery.

CHAP. XV.

GOD again declares to *Jeremiah*, who had interceded for the *Jews*, that his prayers ſhould not be heard; that their ruin was determined, becauſe they had entirely forſaken the Lord; and that they were to be delivered into the hands of their enemies, who would deſtroy them; to the wild beaſts, and fowls of the air, who would devour them; and to all kinds of miſeries. The prophet complains of the ill treatment he met with from the *Jews*, becauſe of his threatening them with the judgments of God; but the Lord comforts him, and aſſures him of his protection.

REFLECTIONS.

FROM this chapter we may gather theſe three inſtructions. I. That although the godly are acceptable to God, and their prayers have great power with him, yet they cannot prevail in favour of thoſe whoſe hardneſs is deſperate. This God declares after the ſtrongeſt manner, when he tells *Jeremiah*, that though *Moſes* and *Samuel*, who had formerly turned away the wrath of God from the people of *Iſrael* by their interceſſion, ſhould pray to him for the *Jews*, he would not regard them. II. The next inſtruction is, that the puniſhment of ſinners, be it never ſo ſevere, is ſo juſt, that they do not deſerve to be lamented; as God ſhews in theſe words, *Who ſhall have pity on thee, O Jeruſalem? or who ſhall bemoan thee? or who ſhall go aſide to aſk how thou doſt? becauſe thou haſt forſaken me.* III. The miniſters of *Jeſus Chriſt* ſee, by the example of *Jeremiah*, that they are often called to tell men harſh and diſagreeable things, which may expoſe men to the hatred of the wicked, but that nevertheleſs they are bound to obey the commands which God gives them, and to keep themſelves pure and undefiled in the midſt of the general corruption; by which means

they

they may be aſſured, that God will take them under his protection; and that they ſhall never fail of his aſſiſtance.

CHAP. XVI.

I. GOD, to convince the *Jews*, and *Jeremiah* too, that the utmoſt calamities were coming upon *Judea*, forbids him to marry, or to go into any houſe of mourning to comfort the afflicted, or be preſent at any feaſt. II. He tells him next, that the crimes of the *Jews*, and their prodigious hardneſs of heart, would be the cauſe of all their miſeries; but he promiſes nevertheleſs to bring them again from the north country, that is, from *Babylon*, after they had ſuffered the puniſhment of their ſins.

REFLECTIONS.

I. God forbad *Jeremiah* to marry, to enter into the houſes of mourning, or to go to any feaſt, that by this behaviour of the prophet he might affect the *Jews* the more, and make them underſtand, that the time of their deſolation drew near; that the children which ſhould be born ſhould be expoſed to all kinds of calamities, and come to a fatal end; that the dead ſhould be unburied and unlamented; and that this people ſhould ſoon have no room to rejoice. Here we ſhall take notice, that in a time of calamity God would have us humble ourſelves, and even abſtain from things which we might lawfully do at another time. II. God poſitively declares in this chapter, that all theſe evils will befal the *Jews*, becauſe they had forſaken him, and had done even worſe than their fathers; that he took notice of all their ways; and that he would recompence their ſins double. This plainly ſhews that God is juſt; that he ſees and knows all the actions of men; and that when they heighten their ſins, they force him, as it were, to take vengeance. III. We ſee, however, in this chapter, that God ſtill preſerved ſentiments of love towards the *Jews*, ſince he

he was pleaſed to put an end to the captivity, and bring them again from *Babylon*, after he had chaſtiſed them for their iniquity, and brought them into the right way. Thus God deals with men; if he ſends afflictions to puniſh them, he does not wholly reject them, and always pardons thoſe who make a right uſe of his corrections.

CHAP. XVII.

I. *JEREMIAH* declares to the *Jews*, that their ſins, and particularly their idolatry, would ſpeedily occaſion their ruin; that the truſt which they put in men could not ſecure them; and that, in order to be happy, they muſt rely upon God alone, who ſearches and knows the heart, who is the Judge of all men, and hateth iniquity. II. The prophet complains of the injuries they did him, proteſts he had not deſired the deſtruction of the *Jews*, and had only told them what God had commanded him to declare. III. He exhorts the king and the people to repentance, and in particular to prevent the profaning of the ſabbath-day; promiſing them, that God would bleſs them if they did; and threatening them with utter deſtruction if they continued in their ſins.

REFLECTIONS.

THE reflections to be made on this chapter are, I. That as the *Jews* were given up to their enemies becauſe they had provoked the Lord; ſo God will, ſooner or later, puniſh thoſe who offend him. II. That it is in vain to think of being ſecure in man's aſſiſtance, when we have God for our friend; and in general, that thoſe who confide in men, and in the arm of fleſh, are accurſed of God; but that he bleſſes all thoſe that truſt in him; and that there is no condition more happy and ſecure than the condition of that man who truſts in God and fears him. III. We ſhould carefully attend to theſe words of the prophet: *The heart is deceitful above all things, and deſperately wicked,*

wicked, who can know it? I the Lord ſearch their heart, I try the reins, even to give to every man according to his ways. This ſhould teach us to diſtruſt ourſelves, to ſtudy to know our own hearts, and to fear God, whoſe knowledge is infinite, and who is the Judge of all men. IV. This chapter teaches us, that thoſe who acquire riches unjuſtly, do not long enjoy them. Laſtly, Perſons of a public character have here ſeveral very important leſſons. The miniſters of the Lord ſhould learn, by the example of *Jeremiah*, not to think it ſtrange if the wicked reject their miniſtry; to be faithful in the diſcharge of it, and always to abound with love and charity for thoſe to whom they are ſent, though they meet with an unkind reception. And the earneſt exhortations addreſſed by the prophet to kings and rulers, concerning the obſervation of the Sabbath, ſhew, that it is the duty of princes and magiſtrates, to perform what God commands, to reverence the divine ſervice, and to prevent its being profaned. This is the way to obtain the divine favour, as, on the contrary, irreligion and impiety deprive kingdoms and ſtates of his protection.

CHAP. XVIII.

I. *JEREMIAH* repreſents to the *Jews*, by the compariſon of a potter and the clay, that God might deſtroy them, becauſe of their ſins; and eſtabliſh them again, if they were converted. II. He exhorts them to repentance, and threatens them, that if they continued to forget God, they ſhould be deſolate. Laſtly, He again complains of the conſpiracies which the *Jews* had formed to take away his life; and he denounces the vengeance of the Lord againſt them.

REFLECTIONS.

THE compariſon of a potter, which is propoſed in this chapter, does not ſignify that God has created men to deſtroy them, or render them unhappy, by the

the mere effect of his will; but the design of it was, to teach the *Jews* that they were in the hands of God, and that he was able to punish them, and afterwards to restore them; in the same manner as a potter, who, thinking to make a good vessel, and not succeeding, might break it, and make another with the same clay. Thus God himself explains it, when he says, that if a nation which he had purposed to destroy, turned from its iniquity, he would not destroy it; and, on the contrary, if a nation which he had determined to bless, did not hearken to his voice, he would withdraw his favour from that nation. He declares, moreover, that though he had threatened to destroy the *Jews*, he was still ready to pardon them, and that he would not put his threatening in execution, unless they obstinately persisted in their impatience and hardness of heart. From this doctrine, which is of great importance, it appears, that God never wants either power or goodness to do good to men; that he is perfectly just; and that no evil befals them but what they bring upon themselves. We see in the impious proceeding of the *Jews*, who contrived to kill *Jeremiah*, that the servants of God, by discharging their duty, sometimes incur the hatred of the wicked. As for the last verses of this chapter, where *Jeremiah* seems to make imprecations against the *Jews*, they must not be understood as if he had desired their ruin: it appears from this whole Book, and even from this place, that he had prayed for them; and he calls God to witness, in the foregoing chapter, that he did not wish for their calamity; but these are threatenings which he denounces from God, in quality of prophet, to shew, that their destruction was inevitable, and that evils of every kind were to fall upon them and their children.

CHAP. XIX.

THE design of this chapter is, to make the *Jews* understand, that God, for the punishment of their idolatry, and especially for having sacrificed their children

children to the idol *Moloch*, otherwiſe called *Baal*, in the valley of *Tophet*, would cauſe them to periſh in ſo lamentable a manner, that they ſhould eat their children during the ſiege of *Jeruſalem*; and that their carcaſes ſhould be eaten by the beaſts in the ſame valley. This the prophet repreſents by breaking an earthen veſſel in that place; ſignifying thereby, that God would deſtroy them with the ſame eaſe, and as ſuddenly as a man breaks an earthen pot; and that as the pieces of a broken pot cannot be joined together, and are of no uſe, ſo likewiſe their ruin ſhould be total, and moſt of them ſhould periſh without recovery.

REFLECTIONS.

I. IT muſt here be obſerved in the firſt place, that the *Jews* had been guilty of the blackeſt crimes, and of the moſt execrable idolatry that ever was heard of, ſince they were come to that paſs, as even to burn their own children in honour of their idols. This is a very remarkable proof, that not only thoſe that know not God, but even thoſe who have known him, and profeſs to worſhip him, may fall into the greateſt, wickedneſs, and renounce all ſentiments of religion and nature too, when they have once loſt the fear of God, and have given themſelves up to blindneſs and hardneſs of heart. II. We muſt conſider, that God declared the *Jews* ſhould be killed, and expoſed dead in the ſame valley, where they had ſacrificed their children to idols, and ſhould be reduced by famine, to eat the fleſh of their ſons and of their daughters. In this event, the juſtice of God is very evident, who frequently puniſhes men by thoſe very things wherewith they had offended, and makes thoſe who had been diſtinguiſhed by his favours, become, upon their abuſe of them, examples of the moſt ſevere vengeance. The ſimilitude of the earthen pot broken in peices is very remarkable; well expreſſing the facility with which God can deſtroy ſinners, and ſhewing, that nothing can deliver or recover them, when he is pleaſed to puniſh them.

CHAP.

CHAP. XX.

A PRIEST, named *Paſhur*, ſtruck *Jeremiah*, and threw him into priſon, for having foretold the deſtruction of *Jeruſalem*; but *Jeremiah* told him, that he himſelf ſhould be carried captive to *Babylon*, with all his family, and all his friends; and that he ſhould die there. The prophet complains of being expoſed to the hatred of the wicked *Jews*, and expreſſes his grief upon that account.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter preſents us with three principal reflections: I. We ſee how *Jeremiah* was beaten, and put into priſon, for having propheſied againſt the *Jews*; but that he did not forbear, however, to foretel their deſtruction; and in particular denounced *Paſhur*'s doom, declaring, that he ſhould feel the effects of the divine vengeance. Thus the wicked are provoked with, and perſecute thoſe who ſpeak to them in the name of God; but the true miniſters of the Lord always do what God commands them, and thoſe who ſet themſelves againſt them receive the juſt reward of their malice. II. We ſee here, how *Jeremiah* was aſtoniſhed and afflicted at the oppoſition he met with from the *Jews*: but that he ſtrengthened himſelf, nevertheleſs, by truſting in God. All who ſuffer for righteouſneſs ſake ſhould conſider this, that they may not be diſcouraged when they meet with obſtacles. III. The laſt reflection relates to the laſt verſes of this chapter, in which *Jeremiah* ſays, *Curſed be the day in which I was born*: It might be obſerved, that the prophet does not ſpeak of himſelf here, but repreſents the ſentiments of the *Jews*, what they would ſay at the time of their deſtruction, which would be ſo terrible, that it would be more happy for them if they had never been born, and they themſelves would wiſh for death. But ſuppoſe theſe words ſhould relate to *Jeremiah*, we muſt not believe that he was guilty of murmur-

murmuring or impatience; for in the ſame chapter he appears animated with a joy and confidence which led him to praiſe God; but only that he meant by theſe proverbial ways of ſpeaking, in uſe at that time, to ſhew what a wretched thing it was to live among a people ſo corrupt, and how much he was grieved to ſee their obſtinacy, and to conſider the miſeries that would ſo heavily fall upon them.

CHAP. XXI.

THAT which is related in this chapter, happened when the *Chaldeans* beſieged *Jeruſalem*, under the reign of *Zedekiah*. This prince having ſent to conſult *Jeremiah* what he was to do, the prophet tells him, that as God had reſolved to deliver the city to the *Chaldeans*, they muſt ſubmit to them; that they who did ſo, would ſave their lives; but if the king and people refuſed to ſurrender, they would be expoſed to the greateſt deſolations of war. He alſo exhorts the king, and the magiſtrates, to reform themſelves, and to do juſtice to every body.

REFLECTIONS.

HERE we are chiefly to conſider the advice which *Jeremiah* gave to king *Zedekiah* and the *Jews*, to ſubmit themſelves to the *Chaldeans;* declaring that if they did ſo, and obeyed the voice of God, they ſhould be ſpared; but if not, they ſhould periſh by the ſword, by famine, and by peſtilence. We ſee by this, that God had indeed reſolved to deliver *Jeruſalem* to the *Chaldeans*; but that he had not reſolved their deſtruction; and that it was ſtill in their own power to ſave their lives. Thus God gave proofs of his goodneſs, at the ſame time that he exerciſed his juſtice. This too ſhews very plainly, that the perdition of ſinners is not ſo determined but they may prevent it; God is always inclined to pardon them and ſpare them, even when he chaſtiſes them; and if at laſt he overwhelms them with his judgments, it is becauſe he is forced to it by their

their impenitence. This teaches us likewiſe, that when God will correct us, we muſt ſubmit to it, leſt by our reſiſtance we draw upon ourſelves greater evils. Laſtly, This chapter teaches judges and magiſtrates, that the exerciſe of juſtice is one of the moſt effectual means to prevent the judgments of God, and procure his protection.

CHAP. XXII.

I. *JEREMIAH* exhorts the king of *Judah*, and the people to repentance, and particularly to the practice of juſtice; threatening them, if they did not, that *Jeruſalem* ſhould be laid waſte. II. He foretels what ſhould happen to the poſterity of *Joſiah*, king of *Judah*; he ſays, that *Shallum*, otherwiſe named *Jehoahaz*, ſhould be carried into *Egypt*, and die there; that *Jehoiakim*, his brother and ſucceſſor, ſhould be deprived of burial; and that *Coniah*, otherwiſe called *Jeconiah*, ſhould be carried to *Babylon* by the *Chaldeans*; that he ſhould die there, and have no ſon to reign after him.

REFLECTIONS.

WE may learn from this chapter, that of the things which have the greateſt tendency to ſecure the favour and protection of God to any people, one is, when judges render juſtice to every one impartially. If the kings and princes of *Judah* had diſcharged their duty in this matter, according to the exhortations of the prophet, they would have been ſpared; but for having failed therein, they were deſtroyed, and the whole nation periſhed with them. There is another paſſage in this chapter, which deſerves to be taken notice of; that place, I mean, where it is ſaid, that thoſe who attempt to raiſe and eſtabliſh their families by wicked ways, and by covetouſneſs, ſhall never proſper. But the principal reflection to be made on what has been read, relates to the kings here ſpoken of. All that *Jeremiah* had ſaid came unto them. *Shallum*, ſon of king

king *Joſiah*, was taken by the king of *Egypt*, and carried into that country, where he died; *Jehoiakim* fell into the hands of the *Chaldeans*, was carried in chains to *Babylon*, and ſo was *Jeconiah*, who had no ſucceſſor. Thus God fulfilled the predictions of *Jeremiah*, and puniſhed all their wicked and idolatrous princes. Moreover, the impiety of the decendants of the good and pious king *Joſiah*, who all of them came to a tragical end, ſhews, that the piety of parents will not ſkreen their children from the judgments of God, if thoſe children provoke the Lord by their diſobedience.

CHAP. XXIII.

JEREMIAH threatens the wicked ſhepherds, that is, the magiſtrates, the prieſts and the prophets, accuſing them of being the cauſe of all the abominable practices which prevailed in the kingdom of *Judah*; and he foretels, that God would raiſe in the family of *David* a great king, who ſhould be the deliverer of his people. After this he complains, that the prieſts and prophets of *Judah* were ſtill worſe than thoſe of the kingdom of *Iſrael*; he ſays, that they abandoned themſelves to the utmoſt exceſſes, and, beſides this, deceived the people, falſly boaſting of revelations, and promiſing them peace; and he denounces the divine vengeance againſt them.

REFLECTIONS.

HERE let us conſider, I. That God's promiſe, to give his people good ſhepherds, and to raiſe in the houſe of king *David* a righteous prince, was fulfilled, not only when the *Jews* returned from *Babylon*, under the conduct of *Zorobabal*, who was a deſcendant of *David*, and had *Ezra*, *Jeſhua* and *Nehemiah*, and other good men for their governors; but chiefly when God ſent *Jeſus Chriſt*, born of that family, to be the great Shepherd and redeemer of the church. II. The complaints that God here makes againſt falſe

ſhepherds, and chiefly againſt the prieſts and prophets of *Jeruſalem*, are worthy our whole attention. The Lord ſays, they were worſe than thoſe of *Samaria*, who were however idolators; that the land was filled with adulteries, perjuries, and all manner of wickedneſs; but that the prophets were the occaſion of it: That if they had made known to the *Jews* the will of God, they might have been converted from their ſins; but inſtead of that, they had deceived them, telling them there was nothing to fear. Miniſters, who are ſent by God, ſhould attend to theſe words, and faithfully record them in their minds. But it is a great misfortune indeed, when, inſtead of faithfully declaring the will of the Lord, and turning ſinners from the error of their ways, they flatter and ſoothe them in their crimes, and withal ſet them a bad example. God declares very expreſsly, that he is angry with theſe wicked ſhepherds, and that they cannot eſcape his knowledge and vengeance. By this every one may ſee of what conſequence it is, that paſtors and rulers ſhould diſcharge their duty. But ſince God threatens the people as well as the prophets, it is evident, that if thoſe who ſeduce others are guilty, thoſe who ſuffer themſelves to be ſeduced will be juſtly puniſhed; that we ought therefore to be well inſtructed in the will of God, and after we have known it, ſhould be afraid to offend God by diſobedience; and to this end ſhould always remember, what he himſelf ſays in this chapter, *Can any hide himſelf in ſecret places, that I ſhall not ſee him? Do I not fill heaven and earth, ſaith the Lord?*

CHAP. XXIV.

FOR the right underſtanding of this chapter, we muſt know, that ſome years before *Nebuchadnezzar* king of *Babylon* came to deſtroy the city and temple of *Jeruſalem*, part of the people had already been carried to *Babylon*, with *Jeconiah* king of *Judah*. In that time the prophet *Jeremiah* had the viſion which is here

here related, and in which he ſaw two baſkets of figs, the one good and the other bad; by which God ſignified to him the difference there would be, between the *Jews* that were carried away with *Jeconiah*, and thoſe that remained at *Jeruſalem*; which was, that the firſt ſhould be preſerved, and that God would reſtore them; whereas the others ſhould be almoſt all deſtroyed by war, famine, and peſtilence, together with *Zedekiah*, the laſt king of *Judah*; and that thoſe who ſhould go down to *Egypt*, after the taking of *Jeruſalem*, ſhould there come to a moſt miſerable end. Thus it happened eleven years after this prophecy.

REFLECTIONS.

WE are to conſider upon this chapter, I. That when *Jeconiah*, and a part of the people, were carried away captives to *Babylon*, it ſhould have been a warning to the *Jews* of their approaching deſtruction. Thus God puniſhes men by degrees; and, before he deſtroys them quite, warns them by ſeveral corrections that their deſtruction is not far off; and if they prevent not his judgments, they will feel the weight of them. II. It is to be obſerved next, that the *Jews* who were firſt carried away to *Babylon* were happily reſtored; whereas thoſe that ſtayed at *Jeruſalem*, and thought themſelves much more happy than their captive countrymen, but were much more wicked and guilty than they, ſince they made a very ill uſe of what had happened to their brethren, were almoſt all deſtroyed by the ſword, peſtilence, and famine, when *Nebuchadnezzar* came the laſt time againſt *Jeruſalem*. *Zedekiah* their king came to a fatal end, with all the great men of his court; and thoſe among them who went down into *Egypt*, after the taking of *Jeruſalem*, felt the heavieſt load of the divine judgments. This example ſheweth, that thoſe whom God puniſhes are not always the moſt guilty, nor the moſt miſerable; and that ſinners who enjoy proſperity, and whom God bears longer with, are treated with the greateſt ſeverity, when they perſiſt in their impenitence.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXV.

THIS chapter, contains three remarkable things. I. That the *Jews*, for deſpiſing the exhortations of the prophets, and, above all, thoſe they had received from *Jeremiah*, during the ſpace of twenty-three years, were to be given up to the *Babylonians*. II. That the captivity of *Babylon* ſhould laſt ſeventy years. III. That ſince God did not ſpare his own people, he would not ſpare other nations; that the *Egyptians*, the ſeveral people of *Arabia*, the *Philiſtines*, the *Edomites*, the *Moabites*, and the other neighbours of the *Jews*, together with the *Medes* and *Perſians*, ſhould be puniſhed; after which, the *Babylonians* themſelves ſhould be deſtroyed. This *Jeremiah* repreſents, by ſaying, that all the nations ſhould drink of the cup of the wine of the wrath of God; which is a figurative way of ſpeaking uſed by the prophets, to ſignify the divine vengeance.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE firſt reflection to be made upon this chapter is, that God bears with men with great patience; that he exhorts them a long time to repentance; but that if they abuſe his long-ſuffering, he at laſt executes his threatenings. Thus God, after he had in vain called the *Jews* to converſion by the miniſtry of *Jeremiah*, for the ſpace of twenty-three years, brought the king of *Babylon* to deſtroy them. II. God, to comfort his people, promiſed to bring them back from the *Babyloniſh* captivity at the end of ſeventy years; and then to puniſh the *Babylonians* themſelves. Theſe ſeventy years began in the reign of *Jehoiakim*, when a great number of *Jews* were carried to *Babylon*, with part of the ſacred veſſels of the temple; and they ended at the time when the *Jews* returned into their own country, by the permiſſion of *Cyrus* king of *Perſia*. III. It is to be obſerved, that the *Egyptians*, the *Philiſtines*, and the other nations here named, were brought

under ſubjection to the king of *Babylon*, as *Jeremiah* had foretold; and that after this, the *Babylonians* were ſubdued by the *Medes* and *Perſians*. God here ſpeaks as the Lord of the world, who diſpoſes of kings and nations as he pleaſes; and theſe great events, which *Jeremiah* and the other prophets had ſo expreſsly foretold, are inconteſtible proofs of the divinity of the prophecies, as well as of the truth of God's promiſes, his protection of his church, and his juſtice in puniſhing its oppreſſors. Here likewiſe we ſhould conſider, that if God ſpares not his church, other nations, and the wicked in general, ſhall not eſcape his vengeance; and that if he made uſe of wicked kings to puniſh nations, he at length rendered to thoſe proud and impious princes, who had been the inſtruments of his vengeance, the puniſhment that was due to them; which ſhould teach us to adore that Providence which overrules all things with wiſdom, juſtice, and goodneſs.

CHAP. XXVI.

JEREMIAH ſtill perſiſting to foretel the deſtruction of *Jeruſalem* and the temple, the prieſts lay hold of him, and, with the people, require that he ſhould be put to death. But *Jeremiah*, without being diſcouraged, continued to foretel the ſame things in the preſence of the magiſtrates and judges, who after they had heard him, ſent him away without doing any harm to him; God having made an officer of the king, named *Ahikam*, his inſtrument in ſaving the life of the prophet. At the end of this chapter there is mention made of a prophet, named *Urijah*, whom *Jehoiakim* cauſed to be aſſaſſinated, for having foretold the ſame things as *Jeremiah*.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter ſets three notable examples before us. The firſt is, that of the prieſts and the people of *Jeruſalem*, who would have put *Jeremiah* to death, becauſe he foretold the ruin of their city and temple. This unjuſt

unjuſt and impious proceeding of the *Jews*, ſhews, that their wickedneſs was exceeding great; and that the ſervants of God are ſometimes expoſed to great dangers from thoſe who cannot bear their remonſtrances. The ſame reflections may be made upon the crime which king *Jehoiakim* committed, in ſlaying the prophet *Urijah*, who had foretold the ſame things as *Jeremiah* did. This perſecution of the faithful ſervants of God was one thing which haſtened the deſtruction of the *Jews*. The ſecond example is that of *Jeremiah*, who finding himſelf threatened with death, told the *Jews* that they might take away his life, but ſtill he perſiſted in exhorting and threatening them in the name of God. This character of patience, moderation, and meekneſs, and at the ſame time of zeal and courage, ought to be imitated by all thoſe who exerciſe the ſacred miniſtry, when it is their lot to ſuffer in the diſcharge of their duty. Laſtly, We have the example of ſeveral magiſtrates, and eſpecially of *Ahikam*, one of the chief miniſters of ſtate, who took the part of *Jeremiah*, and acknowledged that he ſpake to them in the name of the Lord; From whence we may infer, that God protected this prophet, and does in his providential care raiſe up perſons, and find out ways for ſecuring his ſervants, who are unjuſtly oppreſſed. Magiſtrates and great men ought to meditate upon this hiſtory, and learn from hence to fear God, and to defend the innocent, and particularly his faithful miniſters; herein imitating *Ahikam*, as well as king *Hezekiah*, who is likewiſe mentioned in this chapter; who, inſtead of being angry with the prophet *Micah*, humbled himſelf, and by his humiliation averted the wrath of God.

CHAP. XXVII.

I. THE kings bordering upon *Judea*, having ſent ambaſſadors to *Zedekiah* king of *Judah*, God orders *Jeremiah* to ſend bonds and yokes to thoſe kings, to ſignify, by this myſterious action, that thoſe

kings ſhould be ſo far from delivering *Zedekiah*, as he expected, that they ſhould themſelves be brought under the dominion of the king of *Babylon*. The prophet tells them to ſubmit to that king; and ſhews, that the empire of the *Babylonians* ſhould laſt till the time of the grandſon of *Nebuchadnezzar*, after which it ſhould come to an end. II. He exhorts *Zedekiah*, and the people of *Jeruſalem*, to ſubmit themſelves to the king of *Babylon*, and not to give credit to the falſe prophets, who made them believe that the veſſels of the temple, which had been carried to *Babylon* with king *Jehoiakim*, ſhould be brought back again to *Jeruſalem*. *Jeremiah* declares, that on the contrary, the remainder of the holy veſſels ſhould likewiſe be taken away, when *Nebuchadnezzar* came to deſtroy the city and temple.

REFLECTIONS.

THERE are four obſervations to be made upon this chapter: I. We obſerve, that *Jeremiah* ſent bonds and yokes to the kings living near *Jeruſalem*, to ſhew them that they ſhould be conquered by *Nebuchadnezzar* king of *Babylon*, who is here called the ſervant of the Lord, becauſe he was to execute the decrees of Providence. This ſhould have taught *Zedekiah* not to expect any aſſiſtance from thoſe kings againſt the *Babylonians*. This action of *Jeremiah*, which the ambaſſadors of thoſe princes were witneſſes of, tended likewiſe to convince them that the Lord, in whoſe name *Jeremiah* ſpake, was the only true God; which they muſt needs be convinced of, when they fell under the dominion of the *Babylonians*, who conquered them all, one after the other. II. It is to be obſerved, that *Jeremiah* foretold, that the monarchy of the *Babylonians* ſhould ſubſiſt till the grandſon of *Nebuchadnezzar*, which was verified by the event; that monarchy ending in *Belſhazzar*, when *Babylon* was taken by the *Medes* and *Perſians*. Theſe are very expreſs predictions, with prove and confirm moſt evidently the divine authority of *Jeremiah*'s prophecies. III. The exhor-

exhortations of the prophet addreſſed to *Zedekiah* and the *Jews*, to ſubmit themſelves willingly to the king of *Babylon*, teach us, that it is in vain to pretend to reſiſt the will of God; and that when he has made known his will to us, and thinks fit to chaſtiſe us, it is beſt humbly to ſubmit to it. Laſtly, we ſee in this chapter, that God forbad the *Jews* to hearken to the falſe prophets, who flattered them and promiſed them peace, and the return of the holy veſſels. It is a great ſin in thoſe who are ſet over the church, to diſſemble the will of God, and flatter ſinners by a baſe compliance; and the true ſervants of God are thoſe who declare the truth ſincerely and without diſguiſe.

CHAP. XXVIII.

A FALSE prophet, named *Hananiah*, oppoſes *Jeremiah*, and foretels that *Jeruſalem* ſhould not be taken by the *Babylonians*; that within two years, the holy veſſels, which had been carried away to *Babylon*, ſhould be brought back to *Jeruſalem*, and that *Jeconiah* ſhould return from thence with all the captives. And to confirm his prediction, he breaks a wooden yoke that *Jeremiah* had made by order of God, which repreſented, that the *Jews* ſhould be made ſubject to the king of *Babylon*, as we read in the foregoing chapter; but *Jeremiah*, when he had told *Hananiah* that the event would ſhew the falſeneſs of his predictions, cauſes a yoke of iron to be made, inſtead of the wooden yoke which *Hananiah* had broken, and prophecies that he ſhould die that year, which accordingly came to paſs.

REFLECTIONS.

THE chief conſideration this chapter affords us is, that at the very time the deſtruction of the *Jews* drew near, there were among them falſe prophets, who promiſed them peace, and a return of the ſacred veſſels of the temple, and of their captive brethren. There have been in all ages falſe teachers in the church, who have lulled

lulled the people in their ſecurity; but it is a dangerous thing to hearken to them, and God is very gracious when he ſends faithful miniſters, who do not flatter their people, nor conceal any thing that they are commanded to ſpeak to men for their good. The courage of *Jeremiah* in reſiſting *Hananiah*, ſhews, that we ſhould never give way to the wicked when they attempt to ſeduce others; but ſhould oppoſe them always, and diſcharge our duty with boldneſs. The puniſhment of *Hananiah*, who died according to the prediction of *Jeremiah*, might have taught the *Jews* that *Hananiah* was a falſe prophet, and that the reſt of *Jeremiah*'s threatenings ſhould be fulfilled. This is an example of the Divine vengeance, which purſues thoſe who reſiſt God and his holy word, and who ſeduce others to ſin or error.

CHAP. XXIX.

IN this letter, wrote to the *Jews* who had been carried away to *Babylon* with king *Jeconiah*, the prophet *Jeremiah* does four things: I. He exhorts them to ſtay in *Babylon*, and to be faithful to the king and government of that country, and not to believe the prophets, who promiſed them that they ſhould be delivered before the ſeventy years of their captivity were expired. II. He promiſes, that at the end of that time God would bring them again to *Jeruſalem*. III. He tells them that the *Jews*, who were yet at *Jeruſalem*, and their king *Zedekiah*, were going to be reduced to the utmoſt deſolation. IV. He foretels the puniſhment of *Ahab* and *Zedekiah*, two lying prophets, and of *Shemaiah*, who had written letters from *Babylon* to *Jeruſalem* againſt the prophet *Jeremiah*.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE order that *Jeremiah* gave the *Jews*, who were at *Babylon*, to ſtay there, and to pray for the proſperity of that city, ſhews us, that God would have us live in ſubmiſſion to the kings under whoſe govern-

ment

ment we are placed, and to pray for the proſperity of their dominions; and that when God thinks fit to chaſtiſe us, we ought to acquieſce in it, and to continue in the condition to which he is pleaſed to reduce us. II. The clear and repeated promiſes *Jeremiah* made the *Jews*, that they ſhould be ſent away free at the end of ſeventy years, expreſs the love of God towards them, and the divinity of this prophecy. III. It is to be remarked, that though the *Jews* who were at *Jeruſalem*, ſeemed to be in a more happy ſtate than thoſe who were at *Babylon*, yet they were to be moſt ſeverely ſcourged by God, for not improving by the miſery of their captive brethren, and for continuing to deſpiſe the voice of the Lord. Thus God proportions his puniſhments to the ſins of men, and thoſe which he puniſhes laſt are uſually treated with the greateſt ſeverity, becauſe they have longeſt abuſed his patience. IV. We find in this chapter, that there were at *Jeruſalem* and at *Babylon* falſe prophets, who railed againſt *Jeremiah*, and who ſeduced the people, and were moreover impure and corrupt men. God, for the trial of men, has in all ages permitted that there ſhould be ſeducers, to oblige us to be upon our guard againſt ſuch people, according to the exhortation of our Lord, and to diſtinguiſh them from the true miniſters of God. But we likewiſe obſerve, in the puniſhment that God inflicted upon the falſe prophets here mentioned, that God condemns all ſuch; ſince *Ahab* and *Zedekiah* were burnt by the king of *Babylon*, and *Shemaiah* periſhed with his family, without ſeeing the deliverance of the *Jews*; whereas *Jeremiah*, who ſpake with ſincerity, exerienced the divine protection.

CHAP. XXX.

THE prophet *Jeremiah*, after he had declared to the *Jews* that they ſhould be led captives to *Babylon*, promiſes here, that God would deliver them from it; that the *Babylonians* ſhould feel his vengeance; and that after he had chaſtiſed his people he would diſplay his infinite power for their reſtoration.

REFLEC-

REFLECTIONS.

THE reflections to be made on this chapter, relate to the love of God, his power, juſtice, and faithfulneſs. The love of God towards this people appears in his promiſing to deliver them from the yoke of the king of *Babylon*, and to cauſe them to dwell again in their own land. His power appears in delivering them, at a time when there ſeemed to be no relief for them, and by means they could never have expected. His juſtice he gave proof of in taking vengeance on the *Babylonians*, who had oppreſſed the *Jews* with ſo much ſeverity and injuſtice. Laſtly, we are to take notice, that God is true and faithful in his promiſes, ſince all that was foretold in this chapter concerning the recovery of the *Jews* came to paſs, when they returned from *Babylon* into their own country, under the conduct of *Zorobabel* and their other leaders. But theſe promiſes were compleatly fulfilled in the perſon of *Jeſus Chriſt*, who was born of the poſterity of *David*. From all which we may conclude, that God, who is always the ſame, will protect the Chriſtian church; which, if he appears ſometimes angry with, his deſign is to purify it; and that it ſhall ever ſubſiſt, in ſpite of the attempts of thoſe who ſeek its ruin.

CHAP. XXXI.

THIS chapter, as well as the foregoing, treats of the *Jews* reſtoration. God promiſes, that after he had chaſtiſed them, and they were converted, he would ſettle them in a happy and glorious condition; and *Ephraim*, that is, the *Iſraelites* of the ten tribes, ſhould ſhare in this happy revolution. He exhorts them no more to lament their deſolation, and gives them ſtrong aſſurances of his love. Laſtly, He promiſes to make a new covenant with them, which ſhould laſt always.

REFLEC-

REFLECTIONS.

UPON this chapter theſe three things are to be conſidered: I. That if the prophets were ſent to threaten the *Jews*, they were alſo ſent to comfort them by promiſes; and that the promiſes which we have juſt been reading, muſt needs tend to ſtrengthen their faith during their captivity in *Babylon*. II. That God promiſed the *Jews* they ſhould return into their own land, after their repentance and converſion; from whence it appears, that as mens ſins are the cauſe of the afflictions God viſits them with, ſo he reſtores them not to favour till he ſees them penitent and humbled. III. The laſt and chief reflection is, that God here promiſes to make a new covenant, which ſhould be as firm as the order of the world, and ſhould laſt as long as heaven and earth remain. St. *Paul*, in the Epiſtle to the *Hebrews*, applies this prophecy to the covenant of the Goſpel; and it is evident, that the true meaning of it is not to be found in the reſtoration of the *Jews*, which was but of ſhort continuance, wherein the *Jews* of the ten tribes, very few of them, had any ſhare; ſo that this promiſe ſuits only the Chriſtian church, with which God has made a covenant that is to laſt until the end of the world. This prophecy ſets before us the privilege we enjoy in living under this covenant, teaches us, at the ſame time, that God's deſign in admitting us into it was to ſanctify us, by putting his law into our hearts, and writing it in our inner parts, that we may ſerve him and obey him all the days of our life.

CHAP. XXXII.

I. *JEREMIAH* being put in priſon at *Jeruſalem*, when the *Chaldeans* were beſieging that city, God commands him to buy a field, and to put the evidence of the purchaſe in a place were it might be preſerved; whereupon *Jeremiah* aſking of the Lord, why he ordered him to buy lands, when the city was to be delivered

vered up to the *Chaldeans*, and the people carried into captivity; God acquainted him, that it was done to be an assurance to the *Jews*, that after they had for the punishment of their sins been sent into captivity to *Babylon*, they should return to their own country, and possess it again.

REFLECTIONS.

THE command that God gave *Jeremiah*, to buy a field, when the *Babylonians* were besieging *Jerusalem*, and he himself was in prison, is very remarkable. This tended to comfort the prophet, and to confirm what he said to the *Jews* concerning their approaching destruction, and their ruin. With this view God ordered the deed of the purchase to be preserved, as a proof and a monument of the truth of *Jeremiah*'s predictions. From hence we learn, that nothing is impossible to God; that he infallibly executes his promises, how improbable soever they may appear, humanly speaking. We again find in this chapter, that the inhabitants of *Jerusalem*, though God had greatly blessed them, and bore long with them, corrupted themselves still more and more; that they ceased not to provoke him, which was the reason he gave them up to the power and cruelty of the *Babylonians*; but after he had made the *Jews* suffer the punishment they deserved, he had pity on them. God severely punishes any contempt offered to his goodness, or ungrateful returns for favours received; but he does not wholly withdraw his love from those that have offended him; and when his corrections have produced their effect, he restores them to his favour, and makes the expressions of his love succeed those of his wrath.

CHAP. XXXIII.

THIS prophecy is a sequel of the foregoing: Its contents are, that *Jerusalem* should be taken, its houses destroyed by the *Babylonians*, and its inhabitants

tants put to death; but that afterwards the *Jews* ſhould return from *Babylon*, rebuild the city with glory, and ſhould have divine ſervice performed in the temple as before. God confirms this promiſe, ſaying, his covenant with his people ſhould be as firm and immutable as the order of nature.

REFLECTIONS.

FROM the promiſes made by God to the *Jews*, to bring them again to *Jeruſalem*, to dwell there, and to heap his bleſſings upon them, we are led to conſider, that God is always merciful, and inclined to do good to men, and that it is in love he afflicts them; we are alſo hereby led to take notice of the faithfulneſs of God, and the firmneſs of his covenant. It muſt nevertheleſs be obſerved, that the promiſes here made to the two families of *Iſrael*, that is, to the *Jews* of the kingdom of *Judah*, and thoſe of the ten tribes, were not entirely fulfilled after the captivity of *Babylon*, ſince the greateſt part of the *Iſraelites* of the ten tribes remained in the countries where they had been diſperſed. The ſame thing is to be remarked on what God ſo expreſsly declares, concerning his worſhip being for ever eſtabliſhed at *Jeruſalem*, and his covenant with the houſe of *David* and with the *Jews*, ſubſiſting as long as the world laſted. This can but imperfectly agree with the reſtoration of the *Jews* after the captivity, ſince they did not continue long in *Judea*, and were afterwards deſtroyed by the *Romans*, and the ſervice performed at *Jeruſalem* was quite aboliſhed by the deſtruction of the temple. Theſe promiſes therefore relate to the times of the Meſſiah, and deſcribe the kingdom of *Jeſus Chriſt*, the eſtabliſhment of the Goſpel worſhip among all nations, and the complete converſion of the *Jews*, which will one day be accompliſhed. We ought therefore to bleſs God that theſe promiſes have been fulfilled with reſpect to us, and that we are included in the new covenant, which God had promiſed to make with all men in the latter days.

CHAP. XXXIV.

WHEN *Nebuchadnezzar* was beſieging *Jeruſalem*, *Jeremiah* informs *Zedekiah*, that the city ſhould be taken and burnt; that he ſhould not, however, be put to death, but be carried to *Babylon*, and die there. *Zedekiah* and the *Jews*, terrified at the threatenings of *Jeremiah*, ſhewed ſome tokens of repentance, and ſet the *Jewiſh* ſlaves at liberty, as the law of God directed them to do every ſeven years. But ſoon after, when the *Chaldeans* had retired, and the rulers thought the danger was over, they reduced again to a ſtate of ſlavery thoſe that had been releaſed; whereupon *Jeremiah* declared to them, that becauſe of their hypocriſy, and the violation of their vow, God would cauſe the *Chaldeans* to return, who ſhould burn *Jeruſalem*, and put its inhabitants to death, and lay the whole country waſte.

REFLECTIONS.

THE moſt important reflection to be made on this chapter, relates to the behaviour of *Zedekiah* and the inhabitants of *Jeruſalem*, who finding themſelves beſieged, ſet at liberty the *Jewiſh* ſervants, and pretended they would obſerve the law of God; but as ſoon as the *Chaldeans* retired, becauſe the king of *Egypt* came out againſt them, the *Jews*, imagining they had nothing more to fear, changed their mind, and made ſlaves again of their brethren. Thus ſinners pretend to humble themſelves, and ſeem diſpoſed for converſion whilſt they are threatened, and the danger is near; but as ſoon as their fears are over, they return to their ſins and break their promiſes. *Jeremiah*'s reproaches and threatenings of the *Jews* for their impious and unjuſt proceedings, ſhew, that a repentance and a reformation, which is but of ſhort duration, inſtead of paciſying God, provoked him the more; and that thoſe who violate his covenant, and their own promiſes, after having vowed to obſerve them, ſhall not

not eſcape the puniſhments which their hypocriſy and infidelity deſerve. Thus it happened to *Zedekiah* and the inhabitants of *Jeruſalem*: That city was taken ſoon after theſe things; and *Zedekiah* fell into the hands of *Nebuchadnezzar*, who put him in chains, and carried him to *Babylon*, where he died. This is an inſtance of the juſt judgment of God upon ſinners, and eſpecially on wicked princes.

CHAP. XXXV.

FOR the underſtanding of this chapter, we muſt know, that the *Rechabites* were *Jews* deſcended from *Jonadab*, the ſon of *Rechab*, who lived in the time of *Jehu*, king of *Iſrael*, 2 *Kings* x. 15. and upon account of a vow which their father had obliged them to make, drank no wine, and dwelt in tents. Theſe *Rechabites* having fled to *Jeruſalem*, when the *Chaldeans* entered *Judea*, under the reign of *Jehoiakim*, as we are told in the twenty-fourth chapter of the Second Book of *Kings*; *Jeremiah* offered them wine, and bade them drink it: which they refuſed to do, alledging their vow, and the prohibion of their father. Whereupon *Jeremiah* took occaſion to reproach the *Jews*, for not ſhewing the ſame reſpect to the commandments of God, as the *Rechabites* ſhewed to thoſe of their father, and for ſtill perſiſting in their idolatry. For which reaſon he denounces deſtruction to the *Jews*, and promiſes the *Rechabites* that God would bleſs them.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS hiſtory is worthy of our attention. *Jeremiah* preſented wine to the *Rechabites*, not with a deſign to perſuade them to break their vows, but with an intent to make uſe of their example to condemn the *Jews*. When the *Rechabites* had told him, it was not lawful for them to drink wine, on account of the vow their father had laid upon them, *Jeremiah* took occaſion from thence to expoſtulate with the *Jews*, and

and expoſe their great guilt in breaking the divine commands, and the vow they had made to obſerve them; though theſe laws related not to things of an indifferent nature, as the uſe of wine, but to the moſt neceſſary and indiſpenſable duties. He reproaches them for the continual exhortations to repentance, which God had given them by his prophets, and which they had refuſed to hearken to, whilſt the *Rechabites* religiouſly obſerved the vow laid upon them a long time before. The inſtruction this furniſhes us with, is, that thoſe who do not fulfil the vows they have made to God, nor keep his covenant, muſt expect the puniſhments which are denounced againſt thoſe who ſhall tranſgreſs it; and, on the contrary, that thoſe who obſerve the duties required, ſhall be bleſſed of God, as the *Rechabites* were becauſe of their piety.

CHAP. XXXVI.

I. *JEREMIAH* cauſes his threatenings againſt the *Jews* to be writ in a book; and as he could not go himſelf into the temple, he orders *Baruch* to read them before the people upon a day of faſting. II. *Baruch* having read them in the preſence of the people, and of the officers of king *Jehoiakim*, that prince cauſed the writings to be brought to him; and after he had heard part of it read, he cut it in pieces and threw it in the fire, and ordered *Jeremiah* and *Baruch* to be ſeized: but God commanded *Jeremiah* to write another book, containing the ſame things as that which *Jehoiakim* had burnt, and to tell the king, that God would puniſh him for his impiety; that his judgments ſhould fall upon him and his poſterity; and that his body ſhould be deprived of burial.

REFLECTIONS.

IN this hiſtory we are to remark, I. That God, on a ſolemn faſt-day, did, by the hand of *Jeremiah* and *Baruch*, warn the *Jews* of the dangers that threatened them,

them, that they might avert them by their repentance. This was a proof of the divine goodneſs toward that people, who were very near their ruin. Thus does God warn ſinners, and afford to them the laſt means to eſcape their deſtruction. II. We here ſee the extreme impiety of king *Jehoiakim*, who, inſtead of humbling himſelf, upon the hearing of thoſe threatenings, cut the book in which they were contained, and threw it into the fire, without regard to the intreaties of ſome of his officers, who would have prevented him, and commanded *Jeremiah* and *Baruch* to be caſt into priſon. This behaviour of *Jehoiakim* is a proof of the greateſt impiety, and of the utmoſt contempt of God and his word. Behold how the wicked, inſtead of being affected by the warnings they receive from God, grow angry at them, and even quarrel with God, his word, and his ſervants. III. The order that *Jeremiah* received from God, to write in another book the ſame things that were contained in that which the king had burnt, and to add thereto particular threatenings againſt him, ſhould lead us to acknowledge, that it is in vain for the wicked to pretend to ſtop the mouth of God's ſervants, or to ſcoff at his word. What God has determined is always executed; and, ſooner or later, impious and profane men will bear the puniſhment due to them; as it happened to king *Jehoiakim*, who periſhed miſerably, and whoſe carcaſe was thrown into the draught-houſe, as *Jeremiah* had foretold in the twenty-ſecond chapter of this Book.

CHAP. XXXVII.

KING *Zedekiah* deſired *Jeremiah* to intercede with God for him, and for the *Jews*, at the time when the *Chaldeans* made war againſt them; but the prophet acquainted him, that although the *Chaldeans* had raiſed the ſiege of *Jeruſalem*, to go and fight with the king of *Egypt*, who was come to his aſſiſtance, yet they ſhould return and take the city. After this,

Jeremiah

Jeremiah going out of *Jeruſalem*, was ſtopped, and accuſed of deſigning to go over to the *Chaldeans*; upon which charge he was very much abuſed, and thrown into a dungeon; but king *Zedekiah* cauſing him ſecretly to be brought before him, the prophet foretold to him again, that he ſhould fall into the hands of the king of *Babylon*, and beſought him not to ſend him back to the dungeon, leſt he ſhould die there; whereupon the king ordered that he ſhould be put in the court of the priſon, and fed there during the ſiege of *Jeruſalem*.

REFLECTIONS.

THERE are four obſervations to be made upon this chapter: I. That wicked men ſeem ſometimes to have recourſe to God in danger, but that they do it not ſincerely. This we may ſee in king *Zedekiah*, who, when he was beſiged, applied to the prophet for his prayers and counſel; but did not turn from his iniquities, nor follow the advice which the prophet gave him. II. The next conſideration relates to what *Jeremiah* declared to the king, telling him, not to depend upon the aſſiſtance of the *Egyptians*, nor upon the king of *Babylon*'s raiſing the ſiege of *Jeruſalem*; but that the city ſhould be certainly taken by the *Chaldeans*. From whence we may learn, that it is in vain to truſt in the help of man, when God is not on our ſide, and that nothing can hinder the execution of his purpoſes. III. We ſee that *Jeremiah* was unjuſtly accuſed by the *Jews*, and was even beaten and thrown into a dungeon, and yet did not forbear telling the king, that he ſhould be ſubdued by the *Chaldeans*. The miniſters of the Lord have been often expoſed to perſecution and injuſtice; but the fear of men never ſtops the mouths of thoſe who are animated with a true zeal. IV. We are here to take notice, that God protected *Jeremiah*, and ſoftened the heart of *Zedekiah* towards him, ſo that he not only ſaved him from the dungeon he had been thrown into, but fed him likewiſe whilſt the ſiege laſted, and the famine prevailed

in

in *Jeruſalem*. Thus Providence ſets bounds to the malice of the wicked, delivers the righteous, and makes good men meet with comfort and help in the worſt of times.

CHAP. XXXVIII.

I. THE chief men of *Jeruſalem* cauſe *Jeremiah* to be put in a dungeon full of mire, becauſe he continued to foretel the taking of *Jeruſalem*: But an officer named *Ebed-melech*, interceded for him, and took him out of the dungeon. II. *Jeremiah* being ſecretly brought before the king, ſtill propheſies, that the city ſhould be taken by the *Chaldeans*, and earneſtly exhorts *Zedekiah* to ſurrender himſelf to them; promiſing him, that if he did ſo, he and his houſhold ſhould ſave their lives, and the city ſhould not be burnt. The king was almoſt perſuaded, but had not courage to follow the advice of the prophet, who was ſent back to priſon, and remained there till the taking of *Jeruſalem*.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter affords us ſeveral very inſtructive leſſons. I. The firſt is, that the ſervants of God are often perſecuted and ſlandered for diſcharging their duty. This *Jeremiah* experienced, when he was accuſed, and impriſoned as a traitor to his king and country, becauſe he adviſed the *Jews* to ſubmit to the *Chaldeans*. II. The deliverance of *Jeremiah*, who, by *Ebed-melech*, was taken out of the dungeon, in which he muſt have periſhed, is a proof of the care God takes of the righteous when perſecuted; and the piety of *Ebed-melech*, who had the courage to intercede for *Jeremiah*, ſhews, that thoſe who fear God, do always what they can in defence of oppreſſed innocence. We ſhall ſee in the following chapter, that the piety of *Ebed-melech* did not go unrewarded. III. The advice *Jeremiah* gave the king, aſſuring him in the moſt poſitive and expreſs manner, that if he ſur-

rendered to the *Chaldeans*, no harm ſhould happen to him, and *Jeruſalem* ſhould not be burnt; but if he did not, he would expoſe himſelf and that city to the greateſt miſeries, clearly proves that the deſtruction of that prince, and of *Jeruſalem*, was not ſo determined but he might have prevented it. The divine threatenings and predictions, and the knowledge God has of futurity, do not deprive men of their liberty, ſince the evils they are threatened with are brought on them by their own fault. Laſtly, let us, above all, take notice of the behaviour of *Zedekiah*. That prince had a regard for *Jeremiah*, and even wiſhed to follow his advice; he was moved with what the prophet had told him, and almoſt determined to do as he adviſed; but his fear of the rulers of the people prevented him. Thus do ſinners act: When God ſpeaks to them, they are ſometimes affected; there are ſtill ſome remains of good in them, which preſs them to their duty; but they are hindered from following the dictates of their conſciences, by a falſe ſhame, by the reſpect they have for men, and by other the like motives, by which means they let ſlip the favourable opportunity, and after long ſtruggling and reſiſtance, they take the worſt ſide and periſh. This was the cauſe of *Zedekiah*'s ruin. The ſcripture remarks, that he humbled not himſelf when *Jeremiah* ſpake unto him in the name of God; and notwithſtanding the ſolicitations of the prophet, and the conviction of his own conſcience, reſolved not to yield to the *Chaldeans*. The warnings contained in this chapter are the laſt that God gave him; and as he neglected to improve them, it was afterwards too late to do it, and he drew upon his ſubjects and himſelf the utmoſt miſeries, as we find related in the next chapter.

CHAP. XXXIX.

WE have in this chapter, I. An account of the taking of *Jeruſalem*, and of king *Zedekiah*'s being carried away to *Babylon* with the *Jews*, after that

Nebuchadnezzar had cauſed his ſons to be ſlain before him, and put out his eyes. II. We ſee what happened to *Jeremiah*, and the reſpect which the *Chaldeans* had for him. Laſtly, This chapter informs us, that *Ebed-melech*, who had ſaved the prophet's life, was himſelf alſo ſaved when *Jeruſalem* was taken, as *Jeremiah* had promiſed him.

REFLECTIONS.

THERE are three reflections to be made on this chapter: I. That the city of *Jeruſalem* was taken, plundered and burnt with the temple; the king's houſes, and the houſes of the people; and that the *Jews* were carried to *Babylon*, as *Jeremiah* and the other prophets had threatened. So remarkable an event proves that God is righteous, that his threatenings are certain; and that after he has a long while in vain bore with men, he puniſhes them according to their deſerts. II. The next reflection is, that *Zedekiah* was taken; that the king of *Babylon* cauſed him to be tried as a traitor, and one that had broken the oath of allegiance to him; and that he ſlew his children before his face, put out his eyes, and carried him in chains to *Babylon*. What befel that prince, who had received ſo many warnings from God by the prophet *Jeremiah*, ſhews, that they who refuſe to hearken to the voice of God, they who are the authors of other men's ſins, and of public miſeries, and particularly perjured perſons, are made at length examples of the wrath of God. III. It is to be obſerved, that *Jeremiah* was ſaved at the taking of *Jeruſalem;* and that *Ebed-melech*, who had ſaved the life of *Jeremiah*, was alſo himſelf ſpared, as God had promiſed him, becauſe he had put his truſt in him. Theſe two are inſtances of the protection which God vouchſafes to good men in times of calamity. What happened to *Ebed-melech*, ſhews in particular, that thoſe who protect the innocent, and take upon them to defend the ſervants of God when they are oppreſſed, receive the reward of their zeal and piety.

CHAP. XL.

THIS and the following chapters contain the hiſtory of what happened to the *Jews*, whom the king of *Babylon* left in *Judea*, after the taking of *Jeruſalem*. *Jeremiah* being carried to *Ramah* in chains, with the reſt of the captive *Jews*, the captain of the guard to the king of *Babylon* gave *Jeremiah* his choice, either to go to *Babylon*, or ſtay in the country with the *Jews*; but the prophet preferred ſtaying in *Judea*, and went to *Gedaliah*, whom *Nebuchadnezzar* had appointed governor of that country. *Gedaliah* exhorts the *Jews* to ſubmit themſelves to the *Babylonians*, and aſſures them, they might remain in their land with ſafety. This governor is warned, that *Iſhmael* and the king of the *Ammonites* had entered into a conſpiracy againſt him, but he would not believe it.

REFLECTIONS.

THE remarks we are to make on this chapter are, I. That the *Chaldeans* had a particular regard for *Jeremiah* when *Jeruſalem* was taken: and that while the *Jews* were in chains, and carried away captives, the prophet was ſet at liberty. This was a reward of his zeal and integrity, and is a proof of God's care of thoſe that fear him. II. We here ſee *Jeremiah*'s piety, and attachment to his own country and nation. He choſe rather to ſtay in *Judea* with the *Jews* who remained there, than to go to *Babylon*, where he might have ſhared in the favour and kindneſs of *Nebuchadnezzar*. Thus ſhould we always prefer our duty, and the edification of our brethren, before all worldly advantages. III. From the account given in this chapter it appears, that the *Jews* might, if they would, have lived ſecurely in their own country, under *Gedaliah*, by ſubmitting themſelves to the *Chaldeans*; and even that God ſent them that year a plentiful harveſt. This was a mark of God's goodneſs towards that people; and ſhews, that we ought to ſubmit to, and continue

tinue in that condition which God is pleaſed to allot us; and that he is always ready to do good to thoſe who ſubmit to the diſpenſations of his providence. Laſtly, The conduct of *Gedaliah* is worthy of our attention. When notice was given him of the conſpiracy which *Iſhmael*, a prince of the royal family of *Judah*, had formed againſt him, he would not believe it, nor ſuffer them to take away his life. In this he acted like an honeſt man. Good men do not eaſily give credit to tale-bearers; and as they act with candour, and are incapable of doing an ill action, they do not judge others capable of it, nor ever make uſe of treachery, or other unlawful means to ſecure themſelves.

CHAP. XLI.

ISHMAEL treacherouſly kills *Gedaliah*, the governor of *Judea*, and the *Chaldeans* that were with him. The next day he ſlew threeſcore and ten *Jews*, who were going to pray and offer their gifts upon the ruins of the temple; and he took priſoners all the *Jews* that were at *Mizpah*, to carry them to the *Ammonites;* but *Johanan* delivered them, and forced *Iſhmael* to fly. After which, the *Jews* fearing that the *Chaldeans* would revenge the death of *Gedaliah*, whom *Iſhmael* had ſlain, formed the deſign of retiring into *Egypt*.

REFLECTIONS.

THE death of *Gedaliah*, and of the *Jews* who were aſſaſſinated by *Iſhmael* and the other conſpirators, is an inſtance of baſe and deteſtable treachery; which ſhews, that among the *Jews* who remained in *Judea* there were ſome exceeding wicked. However, it appears from what is here ſaid of the fourſcore men, who were going to pray at the ruins of the temple, that there were likewiſe ſome pious and zealous perſons among the remnant of that nation. What befel them, ſhews that God permits ſometimes the innocent to be

be oppreſſed, to bring about the wiſe ends of his providence. However, God did not ſuffer the traitor *Iſhmael*, and his accomplices, to ſucceed in the deſign they had formed of making themſelves maſters of the *Jews: Iſhmael* did not long enjoy the fruit of his crimes; but God ſets bounds to his wickedneſs, by the means of *Johanan*, who put *Iſhmael* to flight, and delivered the people. If God ſuffers wicked men, in ſome meaſure, to ſucceed in their evil purpoſes, he likewiſe puts a ſtop to them, and does not always ſuffer them to bring about their unjuſt ſchemes.

CHAP. XLII.

THE *Jews* who remained in *Judea* after the taking of *Jeruſalem*, conſult with *Jeremiah* about the deſign they had formed of retiring into *Egypt*, and promiſe with an oath to do as he ſhould direct them. The prophet orders them to ſtay in the land, and to ſubmit themſelves to the *Chaldeans*, promiſing them ſecurity if they did ſo, and threatening them, that if they went into *Egypt*, they ſhould there periſh miſerably, and never ſee their own country again.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter preſents us with two reflections: I That the *Jews* aſked counſel of the Lord by *Jeremiah*, whether they ſhould go into *Egypt*, and promiſed with an oath to obey the commandment of the Lord, which, nevertheleſs, they did not do. Thus men ſeem ſometimes ſincerely to deſire to know the will of God, and reſolved to obey it, and yet follow their own will, and break their promiſes. But to conſult God is of no uſe, if we will not do what he commands us. II. God ordered the *Jews* to ſtay in *Judea*, and promiſed them that they ſhould be there in peace: whereas, if they went into *Egypt*, thinking to eſcape the reſentment of the *Chaldeans*, and war and famine, the divine vengeance would purſue them there, and they ſhould periſh by thoſe very ſcourges which they thought

to

to avoid. This was the effect of the great goodneſs of God, who was willing to preſerve them in their own country, and ſecure them from the miſeries that were coming ſhortly upon the *Egyptians*. God, in his dealings with men, affords them ſufficient means of happineſs, and forewarns them of the dangers that threaten them. If we follow his directions, we are always ſecure; but if we reject them, and prefer the maxims of human prudence before the way which God has revealed, we fall inevitably into miſery. Laſtly, It is to be obſerved, that notwithſtanding all that *Jeremiah* declared to the *Jews*, they were obſtinately bent upon going into *Egypt*; and as the prophet reproached them for it, they deceitfully deſired him to conſult the Lord for them. Strange infidelity and rebellion! The *Jews* think themſelves ſecure in their own country, when the prophets threaten them with divine judgments; and think themſelves in the utmoſt danger, when *Jeremiah* aſſures them they have nothing to fear. Thus men believe neither God's promiſes nor threatenings; and by that means ſtop the current of his mercies towards them, and expoſe themſelves to his ſevereſt vengeance.

CHAP. XLIII.

THE *Jews* oppoſe *Jeremiah*, who commanded them, in God's name, to remain in their own country; and they go into *Egypt*, carrying with them *Jeremiah* and *Baruch*. When the prophet was at *Tahpanhes* in *Egypt*, he foretold that *Nebuchadnezzar* king of *Babylon* ſhould deſtroy the *Egyptians*, and their idol temples, and the *Jews* who had retired into that country.

REFLECTIONS.

IN the behaviour of the *Jews*, we have an inſtance of great impiety, joined to the moſt notorious hypocriſy. They had promiſed with an oath to follow the advice of the prophet; but becauſe his counſel was not

not agreeable to their inclinations, they went down into *Egypt*; and even accuſed the prophet of ſpeaking falſely in the name of the Lord, and deſiring to deliver them into the hands of the *Chaldeans*. Theſe *Jews* repreſent thoſe, who upon ſome occaſions expreſs their zeal and good intentions; but forget their promiſes, and reject the moſt wholeſome counſels, when they thwart their paſſions, and what they had ſecretly propoſed; till at length they proceed to open rebellion, and caſt off all reſtraint. However, it is remarkable, that God ſuffered *Jeremiah* to be carried to *Egypt*, that he might there denounce the ruin of the *Egyptians*, as well as of the *Jews*, who had put their truſt in them. Wherever the wicked are, the hand of God finds them out; and thoſe who think to avoid, by diſobeying him, the evils they dread, and to that end make uſe of unlawful means, by thoſe very means fall into the evils they thought to ſhun, and are confounded in their hope.

CHAP. XLIV.

IN this prophecy, which *Jeremiah* pronounced in *Egypt* againſt the *Jews* that were fled thither, the prophet reproaches them for continüing in their idolatry and rebellion againſt God, after all the miſeries that had befallen them; and declares, that vengeance ſhould purſue them in the country whither they were fled. But the *Jews* haughtily replied, that they were reſolved to ſacrifice to idols, and to the queen of heaven, that is, the Moon; which made *Jeremiah* inform them, that God would root them out all, except a ſmall number; and the king of *Egypt* ſhould be delivered into the hands of the king of *Babylon*. This chapter deſerves a particular attention.

REFLECTIONS.

THERE are ſeveral very important reflections to be made upon this chapter: We ſee, that the *Jews* that were in *Egypt*, were not ſubdued nor humbled by the deſolation

deſolation of their country, and ſo obſtinately continued in their ſins, that they hearkened not to what *Jeremiah* had ſpoken to them in the name of the Lord. They even proceed to ſuch exceſs of rage and impiety, as to tell him, that ſince they had left off ſacrificing to idols, they had met with nothing but misfortunes; that this had brought upon them war and famine; and therefore they were reſolved to continue to worſhip falſe gods. This is an example of deſperate wickedneſs, and moſt horrid impiety, eſpecially in a people that knew God, and had lately felt the weight of his judgments for falling into idolatry. But when men have once forſaken God, they grow continually worſe and worſe, and ſo hardened, that adverſity itſelf cannot tame them; and therefore God, ſeeing they are incorrigible, forſakes them utterly. Thus it happened to thoſe unhappy *Jews* who retired into *Egypt*; they were deſtroyed with the *Egyptians*, by war and famine, as *Jeremiah* and the other prophets had foretold; *Nebuchadnezzar* conquered the king of *Egypt*: and the *Jews*, who thought to find a refuge in that king's dominions, periſhed there in a miſerable manner.

CHAP. XLV.

THE Lord comforts *Baruch*, who lamented for the hardneſs of the *Jews;* and promiſes to take care of him, when the city of *Jeruſalem* ſhould be taken by the *Chaldeans*. This ſhould be referred to the time preceding the deſtruction of that city, and to the thirty-ſixth chapter of this book.

REFLECTIONS.

WHAT is here to be obſerved is, that the ſervants of God ought not to abandon themſelves to too much ſorrow, nor be diſcouraged, when their miniſtry is rejected; but always diſcharge the duties of their calling, in full aſſurance that God will be their protector.

CHAP.

CHAP. XLVI.

JEREMIAH foretels, that the *Egyptians* ſhould be twice defeated by the *Babylonians*; firſt at *Carchemiſh* on the river *Euphrates*, where *Pharaoh Necho* was conquered; and then afterwards in *Egypt* itſelf, where *Nebuchadnezzar* carried war and deſolation, in the time of *Pharaoh Hophrah*. *Jeremiah* alſo foretels that the *Jews* ſhould return from the captivity. Theſe predictions were made before the deſtruction of *Jeruſalem*.

REFLECTIONS.

THE predictions contained in this chapter were exactly accompliſhed; *Nebuchadnezzar* having twice defeated the *Egyptians*; once near the river *Euphrates*, in the reign of *Jehoiakim*, king of *Judah*; and the next, when he marched into *Egypt*, and ſubdued it, and carried the inhabitants into captivity, after he had taken the city of *Tyre*, which happened after the taking of *Jeruſalem*. By this means God was pleaſed to puniſh the *Egyptians*, and at the ſame time to chaſtiſe thoſe *Jews* who took ſhelter in that country, contrary to the command of God, ſince a great number of *Jews* periſhed in that war. However, it muſt be obſerved, the prophet foretels, that after this *Egypt* ſhould be inhabited; and, indeed, the *Egyptians*, did return into their own country, as *Ezekiel* expreſsly declares. Laſtly, We here ſee, that God comforts the *Jews*, promiſing to reſtore them, and deſtroy the nations who had oppreſſed them. Thus we ſee that God, amidſt all the changes and revolutions that happen in the world, is ever the preſerver and protector of his church.

CHAP. XLVII.

JEREMIAH foretels, that the *Babylonians* ſhould ſubdue the *Philiſtines*, *Tyrians*, and *Zidonians*.

REFLEC-

REFLECTIONS.

THE *Philiſtines*, as well as the *Tyrians* and *Zidonians*, were conquered and ſubdued by *Nebuchadnezzar*; God having determined to puniſh them for the injuries done to the *Jews*.

CHAP. XLVIII.

JEREMIAH denounces the woes thet were to fall on the *Moabites*. He foretels that *Nebo*, *Kirjathhaim*, and *Heſhbon*, and other cities here mentioned, ſhould be deſtroyed, and they carried into captivity; but that they ſhould be reſtored.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter contains a very particular detail of the calamities that were to come upon the *Moabites* in all their cities, and throughout their whole country; which is exactly conformable to what the prophet *Iſaiah* had foretold before, as we read in the 15th and 16th chapters of his prophecy. All this was fulfilled ſoon after the taking of *Jeruſalem*, when the *Chaldeans* came and ravaged that country. We learn from this chapter, that their idolatry, their inſufferable pride, and the inſults they had offered to the *Jews*, drew upon them the ſevere effects of the divine vengeance.

CHAP. XLIX.

THE prophet denounces the judgments of God againſt the *Ammonites*, the *Edomites*, the *Syrians*, the *Arabians*, and the *Elamites*.

REFLECTIONS.

IN this chapter we ſee, that when *Jeruſalem* was aſſaulted and taken by the *Chaldeans*, and the *Jews* carried into captivity, God poured out his judgments upon the nations here mentioned. God treated them thus,

thus, becauſe they had very much injured his people; and to convince thoſe idolatrous nations, that the God whom the *Jews* worſhipped was the only true God, and the ſupreme Lord of all things. And that it might be paſt doubt he was the diſpenſer of all theſe events, he was pleaſed his prophets ſhould foretel them beforehand, and commit their predictions to writing; and the exact completion of theſe prophecies prove the divine authority of them.

CHAP. L.

THIS chapter declares, that the idols of *Babylon*, whoſe names were *Bel* and *Merodach*, ſhould be deſtroyed; and that the *Babylonians* ſhould be deſtroyed by the *Medes* and *Perſians*, after they had oppreſſed the *Jews* and other nations mentioned in the foregoing chapters; and that then the *Jews* would be ſet at liberty, and return into their own country.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS prophecy foretels two conſiderable events; the deſtruction of the *Babylonians*, and the deliverance of the *Jews*. As to the firſt of theſe events, it is to be obſerved, that after God had chaſtiſed the *Jews*, the *Egyptians*, and other nations, whoſe ruin *Jeremiah* had foretold, by means of the king of *Babylon*; the *Babylonians* themſelves were puniſhed in their turn, and fell under the dominion of the *Medes* and *Perſians*. God thought fit it ſhould happen, as *Jeremiah* foretold it would, to prove that the gods of the *Babylonians* were but falſe gods, to confound their pride, and to puniſh them for their injuſtice and tyranny, and particularly for reviling the true God, deſtroying his temple aboliſhing his worſhip, and oppreſſing his people. The other event taken notice of in this prophecy, is the deliverance of the *Jews*, which happened at the ſame time; they being ſet at liberty by *Cyrus* king of *Perſia*, after he had taken *Babylon*, and were afterwards protected by the ſucceſſors of that prince.

prince. In the completion of theſe two predictions of *Jeremiah*, let us acknowledge the truth and divinity of theſe prophecies, and at the ſame time the power of God, his juſtice and love to his people. Laſtly, God revealed theſe things to *Jeremiah*, and would have the *Jews* informed of them, in order to ſupport and comfort them when they were going to fall into the hands of the *Chaldeans*.

CHAP. LI.

THE prophet continues to foretel the deſtruction of *Babylon*, and the *Babyloniſh* empire. He ſays, that after God has chaſtiſed ſeveral nations, and eſpecially the *Jews*, by means of the king of *Babylon*, that city ſhould be taken; that the *Babyloniſh* monarchy ſhould be deſtroyed; and that then the captive *Jews* ſhould be ſet at liberty, and return to *Jeruſalem* with joy. This prophecy *Jeremiah* gave in writing to *Seraiah*, one of *Zedekiah*'s principal officers, who was going to *Babylon* with a meſſage from the king his maſter; he ordered him to read it as ſoon as he arrived there, and when he had done reading it, to faſten it to a ſtone, and throw it into the river *Euphrates:* thereby to expreſs the certainty of the deſtruction of that city.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS very remarkable prophecy, which was fulfilled threeſcore years after it was firſt made, is an exact prediction of the taking of *Babylon*, and of the ſeveral circumſtances attending that memorable event. *Jeremiah* ſays, that great city would be taken by the *Medes* and *Perſians* after a long ſiege; that though the inhabitants of *Babylon* thought themſelves ſecure in the ſtrength of their city, and the advantage of their ſituation, ſince it was ſurrounded by the waters of the river *Euphrates*; yet the enemies ſhould enter in, after they had turned the courſe of that river, and dried up the other waters that were about the city.

He

He adds, that the king of *Babylon* ſhould not hear the news, till the enemies had entered the city at one end; and that this ſhould come upon him, when he was in the height of joy, and feaſting with the nobles of his kingdom. He ſays, that the high and lofty walls of that city ſhould be broken down, and no remains be left of its former grandeur. All this perfectly agrees with what *Daniel* and other hiſtorians inform us concerning the taking of that great city, and the end of the *Babyloniſh* enpire. When *Jeremiah* and the other prophets foretold theſe things, the *Babylonians* were at the height of their power and glory; they carried their conqueſts on every ſide, and made all ſubmit to their dominion; they were even then upon the very point of deſtroying the *Jews*, and laying *Jeruſalem* waſte; and yet the prophets declared that the *Babylonians* themſelves ſhould be made deſolate, and their city taken, burnt, and utterly overthrown, by princes who ſhould ſet the *Jews* at liberty, and cauſe *Jeruſalem* to be rebuilt. There is ſuch a character of majeſty in all this, as evidently proves the divine original of theſe prophecies. God thought fit theſe predictions ſhould be read in *Babylon*, for the conſolation of the *Jews* that were already there, and of thoſe that were in a few years to be carried thither; and to teach them that this revolution, ſo fatal to the *Babylonians*, would be very advantageous to the *Jewiſh* nation, which would then be ſet at liberty.

CHAP. LII.

THIS is an account of the deſtruction of *Jeruſalem*, which, after a long ſiege, was taken by the king of *Babylon*. The city and temple were burnt; and *Zedekiah* and the princes of *Jeruſalem* taken and carried to *Babylon* with the people. The ſame hiſtory we read in the 25th chapter of the Second Book of *Kings*. With this hiſtory ends the Book of the Prophet *Jeremiah*.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS hiſtory offers to our conſideration one of the moſt remarkable events that ever happened, which is the taking of *Jeruſalem* by the *Chaldeans*. This city, after it had held out a long ſiege, and endured a ſevere famine, was taken by aſſault, burnt, and utterly deſtroyed. The temple itſelf was involved in this general deſtruction; and God, who had put his name there, and ſet that place apart for his worſhip, permitted the *Babylonians* to profane and burn it, after they had ſtript it of every thing that was moſt valuable; ſo that holy place remained deſolate, and the divine ſervice entirely ceaſed to be performed in it. By which God revenged on the *Jews*, the profanation of the temple, and ſhewed likewiſe, that the ſervice which had been there eſtabliſhed was not always to ſubſiſt. King *Zedekiah* was put in chains and carried to *Babylon*, having his own eyes put out, after he had ſeen his ſons ſlain in his preſence. This was a judgment of God upon that king, who, by his perjury and rebellion againſt the king of *Babylon*, and by his obſtinacy, had brought all theſe miſeries upon his dominions. The prieſts and the rulers were alſo put to death, as the prophet had threatened them, and as they deſerved, ſince, inſtead of faithfully diſcharging their duty, they had ſeduced the people into all manner of wickedneſs. Laſtly, The people were not ſpared; almoſt all the *Jews* periſhed by the famine or by the ſword; and of thoſe who eſcaped the rage of the *Babylonians*, ſome were carried into captivity, and others remained in *Judea*, in a very low and wretched condition. Thus God accompliſhed the many threatenings he had denounced againſt the *Jews* by his prophets, and ſhewed, that those who perſiſt in offending him, become at length examples of his juſtice; and that even his covenant does not ſecure them from his judgments. However, it is worth notice, that the king of *Babylon* treated *Jehoiakim*, king of *Judah*, very kindly, who had

had been captive for a long time in that city: This was an inſtance of the goodneſs of God towards the captive *Jews*, and a preparing the way for their return into their own country, which came to paſs, after the ſeventy years of their captivity were elapſed.

The end of the Book of the Prophet JEREMIAH.

THE

THE

LAMENTATIONS

OF

JEREMIAH.

ARGUMENT.

This book contains the lamentations and complaints which the prophet Jeremiah *pronounced upon the deſolation of* Jeruſalem, *when that city was taken by the* Chaldeans, *and together with the temple burnt and deſtroyed, and the* Jews *carried away captives to* Babylon.

CHAP. I.

I. THE prophet complains that *Jeruſalem*, which was once in ſo flouriſhing a condition, was laid waſt, the people carried into captivity, and the divine ſervice aboliſhed. II. He confeſſes, that all theſe miſeries happened to the *Jews* becauſe of their rebellion againſt God. III. He beſeeches him to have compaſſion on them, and to reſtrain the malice of their enemies.

REFLECTIONS *after reading the chapter.*

I. THE deſtruction of *Jeruſalem* affords us a woeful inſtance of divine juſtice. The ſeverity of this juſtice appears, not only in the city's being taken, and the

people expoſed to the fury of their enemies, and carried into captivity; but more eſpecially in the burning of the temple, and the ſuppreſſion of the divine ſervice. After ſuch an example as this, no one can doubt but God will ſeverely revenge the contempt men offer to his covenant, his worſhip, and the invitations of his mercy. II. As *Jeremiah* lamented and bewailed this deſolation, ſo all thoſe who love God are moſt ſenſibly afflicted, when they ſee men provoke God by their ſins, and his church expoſed to ſufferings. And as the prophet owns, that all the calamities that befel the *Jews* were the juſt puniſhment of their ſins; we ought likewiſe to adore the righteouſneſs of God, in all the evils that happen to us, and receive them as chaſtiſements which we have brought upon ourſelves. Laſtly, In imitation of *Jeremiah*, we muſt zealouſly implore God's mercy, when he is provoked againſt us; and above all, pray fervently for the peace and deliverance of the church.

CHAP. II.

JEREMIAH continues to bewail the deſolation of *Jeruſalem*, of the temple, of *Judea*, and of the whole *Jewiſh* nation. He gives a moſt affecting deſcription of their miſeries, and implores God's mercy.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter engages us to make three reflections: I. The firſt relates to the miſeries that befel the *Jews* in the loſs of all their privileges, and of the divine protection; in the deſtruction of their city and temple; and in the evils they endured, through war, famine and captivity. In all theſe melancholy events, *Jeremiah* acknowledges the juſt judgment of God on that people, who had abuſed the favours he had conferred on them with ſo bountiful a hand. This the prophet had threatened the *Jews* with; and theſe things *Moſes* had foretold would befal them. II. It is to be obſerved, that though the *Babylonians* had reduced the

Jews

Jews to that deplorable condition they were then in, yet the prophet attributes all theſe misfortunes to God; and ſays it was God himſelf who had caſt off his people, and delivered his temple, his alars, and his city, into the hands of the idolators. The enemies of the *Jews* could not have hurt them, if God had not withdrawn his protection from the people which he had choſen. God is the diſpenſer of afflictions to mankind; but in his church, particularly, nothing happens without his will. Laſtly, We ſhould conſider, that when God thus expoſes his church to ſufferings, he does not deſign to deſtroy it, but only to reform and purify it by his corrections. We ſhould paſs the ſame judgment on all the evils that befal men in this life.

CHAP. III.

IN this chapter, which has three parts, I. *Jeremiah* repreſents, by ſeveral figures, the deplorable ſtate of the *Jews*. II. He comforts himſelf, and acknowledges the love of God in puniſhing his people, and takes occaſion to ſhew, that afflictions are neceſſary to men; that God, in ſtrict juſtice, diſpenſes good and evil; and he exhorts the *Jews* to confeſs their ſins, and be converted. Laſtly, He reſumes his deſcription of the miſerable ſtate of the *Jews*, implores the aſſiſtance of God in their behalf, and foretels the deſtruction of the *Babylonians*, and their other enemies.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter is very proper for the inſtruction and comfort of perſons in affliction. In it we learn, I. That God expoſes men to various evils; that he puniſhes them ſometimes with great ſeverity, and reduces them to ſuch a condition, that he ſeems to have quite forſaken them, and left them without hope of remedy. II. *Jeremiah* teaches us, that God does not willingly afflict them, but does it with juſtice, and even with mercy; and that when he chaſtiſes men,

he does not caſt them off utterly, but only propoſes to bring them back to himſelf. *Jeremiah* tells us hereupon, that afflictions are very uſeful and neceſſary for us; that it is good for a man to bear the yoke in his youth; that it is by ſufferings we learn to ſeek God; and that then too it is that God draws nigh to us, ſince he is always gracious to thoſe who hope in him, and to the ſoul that ſeeketh him. III. The prophet teaches us again, that good and evil proceed from the commands of the Moſt High; and that nothing is done here below, but by his will. He inſtructs us in the duty of perſons in affliction, ſaying, that *man* ought not to *complain for the puniſhment of his ſins;* but he ought to *ſearch and try his ways,* and *lift up his heart and hands to God,* confeſſing and forſaking his ſins. Laſtly, *Jeremiah* aſſures us, that God is appeaſed towards thoſe who humble themſelves thus under affliction, and improve under his rod. This doctrine ſhould be well underſtood and remembered, to be uſed at all times, particularly in the time of adverſity.

CHAP. IV.

IN this chapter, which conſiſts of three parts, I. *Jeremiah* deſcribes the terrible judgments of God upon the *Jews,* and compares the happy ſtate they were in before their ruin, with the deplorable condition they were then in. II. He ſays, that their rebellion, and chiefly the ſins of the prieſts aud the prophets, had brought all theſe miſeries upon them. III. He propheſies, that God would deliver his people, and denounces the divine wrath againſt their enemies, and particularly againſt the *Edomites.*

REFLECTIONS.

WE are to conſider in this chapter, I. The great change that happened in the condition of the *Jews,* who from a proſperous ſtate were reduced to the greateſt miſery, being deprived of all the advantages they

they enjoyed, and overwhelmed with all imaginable evils; for God poured out upon them all the fierceneſs of his wrath. Thus we ſee, how thoſe who have been the moſt favoured of God, feel his ſevereſt vengeance when they abuſe his mercies. II. *Jeremiah* ſays, that all theſe miſeries came upon the *Jews*, for their ſins, and particularly for the ſins of the prophets, and the iniquities of their prieſts. Theſe remarkable words ſhew, that one thing which moſt provokes the wrath of God, is the impiety of perſons of a publick character, and eſpecially of the miniſters of religion, becauſe their depravity is commonly followed by the corruption of the people. III. The threatenings here denounced by the prophet againſt the *Edomites*, were occaſioned by their rejoicing at the ruin of the *Jews*, and even contributing towards it. From whence it appears, that if thoſe whom God loves are not ſpared, the wicked and ungodly have no reaſon to flatter themſelves they ſhall eſcape unpuniſhed.

CHAP. V.

THIS chapter is a prayer, in which *Jeremiah* intreats the Lord to have compaſſion upon *Jeruſalem* and the *Jews*; he repreſents the greatneſs of their deſolation, confeſſes that they were juſtly puniſhed for the ſins of their fathers, and earneſtly begs of God to reſtore *Jeruſalem* and his people to their former ſtate.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE fervent zeal with which the prophet beſeeches the Lord to have compaſſion on his people, ſhould excite us at all times to pray earneſtly for the proſperity of the church, and the ſupply of all its wants, whether it be expoſed to ſufferings, or vice and impiety make cruel havock in it. II. Theſe words of the prophet ſhould be taken particular notice of; *Our fathers have ſinned, and are not; and we have borne*

borne their iniquities. We muſt not imagine, that God, who is juſt and good, puniſhes children, ſo as to exclude them from his mercy, for the ſins which their fathers have committed; but it often happens, that God, to chaſtiſe the fathers, and for the good of the children themſelves, expoſes them in this life to the calamities which their fathers, by their ſins, have brought upon them. This the captive *Jews* at *Babylon* experienced; and this God had threatened them with, when he ſays in the law, that *he would puniſh the iniquities of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation;* as we daily ſee it happens in the courſe of his providence. Laſtly, The humble and earneſt prayer which *Jeremiah* made to God to reſtore the *Jewiſh* nation, ſhews, that when God corrects us, and uſes us with the greateſt ſeverity, we ſhould have recourſe to him by a ſerious repentance, and implore his mercy; which is the only way to procure a renewal of his favours.

The end of the Book of LAMENTATIONS.

THE

THE

BOOK

OF THE PROPHET

EZEKIEL.

ARGUMENT.

Ezekiel *propheſied in* Chaldea, *where he was with the* Jews *who had been carried thither with king* Jehoiakim, *about eleven years before the deſtruction of* Jeruſalem. *He propheſied from the fifth year of the captivity, for the ſpace of about twenty years; while* Jeremiah *at* Jeruſalem *was foretelling the ſame things.* Ezekiel *was ſent by God to inſtruct and exhort the* Jews *that were in* Chaldea, *and to foretel the deſolation that was to come upon the* Jews *who were ſtill in* Judea, *the taking of* Jeruſalem, *the ruin of ſeveral nations, the deliverance of the captive* Jews, *the coming of the Meſſiah, the calling of the Gentiles, and the eſtabliſhment of the kingdom of God.*

CHAP. I.

EZEKIEL relates, I. The time and place where God called him. II. A viſion which he ſaw.

REFLEC-

REFLECTIONS *after reading the chapter.*

THERE are two things that here require our attention, namely, the calling of *Ezekiel*, and the viſion he received from God. I. The calling of the prophet, and the command he received from God to declare the things contained in this Book, engage us to hearken to it with attention and reſpect. II. The magnificent viſion of the four living creatures, and of the four wheels, which *Ezekiel* ſaw, was a repreſentation of God's glory, which tended to convince the prophet, that God had appeared unto him. It ſignified likewiſe that God is every where preſent; that his knowledge and power are infinite; that he governs all things by his providence; and as it was by his will *Jeruſalem* was deſtroyed, ſo he would change its condition, and bring the *Jews* again from their captivity, in a way known only to himſelf.

CHAP. II.

I. GOD commands *Ezekiel* to ſpeak to the *Jews*, and to reproach them for their ingratitude.
II. He ſhews him a roll, or a book filled with curſes.

REFLECTIONS.

THE order *Ezekiel* received from God to ſpeak to the *Jews*, and to tell them boldly and without fear all that he ſhould command him to declare unto them, ſhews, that thoſe who are ſent by God ought to diſcharge their commiſſion with zeal, without fearing the malice of men; and always to declare the will of the Lord, *whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear.* It appears likewiſe from hence, that thoſe who are warned, are inexcuſable if they neglect to improve by it. The viſion of that Book, which was filled with lamentations and woes, ſignified, that the curſes which God had denounced againſt the *Jews* by *Moſes* and the prophets, were going to fall heavy upon them;

them; and that they would ſoon be reduced to the moſt deplorable condition.

CHAP. III.

I. GOD orders *Ezekiel* to eat a roll, or a book; which ſignified, that he was to hearken to the word of the Lord, and write it in his own heart; that he ſhould execute the command he received, to ſpeak to the *Jews* in *Chaldea*, and not to fear them, though they ſhould be obſtinate in their ſins: This viſion, which the prophet had already ſeen, was repeated. II. *Ezekiel* goes to the *Jews* that were at *Telabib*, where God inſtructs him again in the duties of his office, confirms him in his calling by a viſion which he had before ſhewn him; and warns him again of the obſtinacy and perverſeneſs of the *Jews*.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE firſt thing to be obſerved on this chapter is, that God tells the prophet, he ſent him not to ſtrange nations, but to the *Jews*; and that nevertheleſs they would not hear him. God is ſo kind as to prevent men by his grace, and make himſelf known to them; but they who ought to be moſt attentive to his voice, and have received the greateſt favours from him, are often the moſt hardened in iniquity. II. It is to be conſidered, that although God knew the obſtinacy of the *Jews*, he was pleaſed nevertheleſs to ſend *Ezekiel* to exhort them: by which we ſee, on one hand, that God warns even thoſe who are moſt corrupt; and that if they do not make a right uſe of it, he will puniſh them with juſtice; and, on the other hand, that the proſpect, or fear of ill ſucceſs, ſhould not prevent the miniſters of the Lord from diſcharging their duty. III. The promiſes God made *Ezekiel* to aſſiſt him, ought to fill with confidence all thoſe who walk faithfully in the duties of their calling. IV. Let us above all obſerve, that when God a ſecond time cauſed *Ezekiel* to behold his glory, he moſt

moſt expreſsly charged him to warn the *Jews* from him; telling him, that he appointed him as a watchman over them; that if he warned not the wicked, and even the righteous, who had turned away from their righteouſneſs, they ſhould die in their ſins, but that he ſhould be accountable for their loſs; whereas if he faithfully warned them, he ſhould deliver his own ſoul. This ſhews with what zeal thoſe who watch over the ſouls of men, and are to give an account, ought to diſcharge their miniſtry, and to warn ſinners, and even good men, if they would not be reſponſible before God for their ſouls, ſhould they periſh through their fault. This teaches us likewiſe, that thoſe who are warned, and do not beware, are without excuſe.

CHAP. IV.

IN this chapter we have a figurative and prophetical deſcription of the ſiege of *Jeruſalem*, and of the famine that would be in that city during the ſiege.

REFLECTIONS.

On this chapter let it be remarked, that God formerly repreſented, by viſions and ſenſible images, what he thought fit to reveal to the prophets; and that they likewiſe uſed to repreſent, by the ſame images and extraordinary actions, what was to come to paſs. The 390 days, in which *Ezekiel* lay on his left ſide, ſignified, that *Jeruſalem* ſhould be beſieged ſo many days; and theſe 390 days anſwered to the 390 years which paſſed between the time that idolatry was introduced by *Jeroboam*, and the taking of *Jeruſalem*. The forty days that the prophet lay on his right ſide, denoted, that from the taking of that city, till the *Chaldeans* had made an end of burning and plundering it, would be ſo many days; and the like number of years paſſed after God had declared, in the reign of *Joſiah*, that the deſtruction of that city was irreverſibly determined. The mean and uncommon food of the prophet, all that time, ſignified the great famine.

mine that would be in *Jeruſalem* during the ſiege. The Lord was pleaſed thus to reveal beforehand to *Ezekiel*, what was ſhortly to happen to the inhabitants of *Jeruſalem*, that the *Jews*, eſpecially thoſe who were in *Chaldea*, might not doubt of the execution of the threatenings which God had denounced againſt their countrymen.

CHAP. V.

GOD commands *Ezekiel* to ſhave his head and beard, to burn one part of the hair, to cut another part with a ſword, to caſt another part to the wind, and to ſhut up the reſt. This was another of the myſterious actions of the prophet, which was to ſignify, that the *Jews* who were at *Jeruſalem* ſhould be deſtroyed, ſome by peſtilence and famine, ſome by war; that others ſhould be diſperſed throughout the world, and that a ſmall number of them ſhould be preſerved.

REFLECTIONS.

WE have, in this chapter, a very expreſs type of the evils that befel the *Jews*, when the *Chaldeans* beſieged and took *Jeruſalem*. Great numbers of them periſhed by the peſtilence; many were carried off by famine during this ſiege; others were ſlain by the enemies; and thoſe who eſcaped theſe misfortunes were diſperſed and ſent into captivity. II. The prophet, when he propoſed this emblem of the *Jews* deſtruction, declared that the *Jews* ſhould be overtaken with theſe plagues, becauſe they had rejected God's ordinances, and profaned his ſanctuary; and eſpecially, becauſe they had imitated, and even exceeded the neighbouring nations in their idolatry. He tells them, that for this reaſon God would puniſh them in the ſight of thoſe nations; and that as they had exceeded the other nations in wickedneſs, he would do ſuch things to them as he had never done before, and would execute his judgments upon them with wrath and

and fury. Thus God puniſhes men for their rebellion, ſuiting their puniſhment to their crimes, and treating thoſe with the greateſt ſeverity, who have had the greateſt ſhare in his favours, when they ungratefully abuſe them.

CHAP. VI.

IN this chapter, which is a continuation of the prophecy in the foregoing, *Ezekiel* propheſies againſt *Judea*, and foretels, I. That the cities and places where the *Jews* had committed their idolatries ſhould be deſtroyed, and they ſhould periſh by war, famine and peſtilence. II. That there ſhould be a remnant of them preſerved and reſtored, after they had been captives in ſtrange countries.

REFLECTIONS.

THERE are three things to be conſidered in this chapter, I. That the inhabitants of *Jeruſalem*, and of all *Judea*, felt thoſe miſeries which *Ezekiel* had denounced againſt them, as we learn from the account of what happened during the ſiege, and at the taking of that city. God thought fit theſe things ſhould be foretold beforehand, that, as it is obſerved in this chapter, the *Jews*, when they came to paſs, might confeſs, that the word of the Lord had not been ſpoken in vain, and might be encouraged to turn to him. II. Since God thus dealt with the *Jews*, to puniſh their ſins, and eſpecially their idolatry, we may from hence learn, that he particularly abhors idolatry; and that he ſeverely revenges the infidelity of thoſe who know him, and, notwithſtanding that, deſpiſe his laws, and profane his worſhip. III. Amidſt theſe threatenings of the prophet, and all theſe expreſſions of God's wrath, we ſee evident tokens of his goodneſs, promiſing to ſpare the remnant of the *Jews*, and to reſtore thoſe that ſhould remember him and be converted; which is an aſſurance to us, that thoſe whom God is moſt provoked with, may ſtill become the objects of his

love,

love, if they acknowledge and bewail their ſins, and make a right uſe of his chaſtiſements.

CHAP. VII.

EZEKIEL continues to deſcribe the ruin of the *Jews*; He declares that the end, that is, the time of their deſolation was come: that God would ſpare them no longer, and that he would ſhortly take vengeance of their idolatry and other ſins, cauſing them to periſh by the ſword, by peſtilence, and by famine; driving them out of their own country, ſending them into captivity, and giving their land to ſtrangers.

REFLECTIONS.

THESE repeated threatenings of *Ezekiel* againſt the *Jews* that were ſtill at *Jeruſalem*, which were all accompliſhed, ſhould ſerve for a warning and example, to teach us, that after God has a long time borne with ſinners, he will at laſt infallibly execute his threatenings. The certainty and ſeverity of God's judgments appear in his expreſs and poſitive declaration, that he would no longer ſpare the *Jews*, nor take pity on them. We muſt not think to rely upon the mercy of God, while we remain in a ſtate of impenitency; ſince there is a time when the goodneſs and patience of the Lord are at an end. There is another thing to be taken notice of on this ſubject, which is, that the prophet here declares, that neither the riches of the *Jews*, nor any other advantages, could ſave them from the ſhame and deſolation that threatened them: from whence we may gather, that nothing can ſkreen men from the wrath of God when they perſiſt in their ſins.

CHAP. VIII.

GOD carries *Ezekiel* to *Jeruſalem* in a viſion, and there ſhews him the many abominations committed by the *Jews*, in worſhiping all ſorts of idols; and he proteſts he will pour upon them all his wrath.

REFLEC-

REFLECTIONS.

THE ſubject of this chapter is well worthy our attention. We ſee here, that the *Jews* at *Jeruſalem*, a little before their deſtruction, had given themſelves up to the greateſt abominations. They worſhipped the ſun, and the images of all kinds of beaſts; their women paid an abominable worſhip to the idols of the *Egyptians;* and to complete their impiety, they committed this execrable idolatry, not only in their houſes, but even in the temple itſelf. Theſe horrid crimes prove, that they had carried their impieties to the higheſt pitch, and that no good was to be expected from them. Farther, we may obſerve, that God revealed all theſe abominations of the *Jews* in a viſion to *Ezekiel*, to convince him, and the *Jews* that were with him in *Chaldea*, that the deſtruction of *Jeruſalem* was inevitable and truly juſt. This ſhews likewiſe that God knows all things, that men cannot hide the knowledge of their ſins from him, though they ſhould commit them in the dark, and never ſo ſecretly, and therefore cannot eſcape his judgment.

CHAP. IX.

IN this chapter, which is a continuation of the viſion mentioned in the foregoing, God, after he had ſhewed *Ezekiel* the abominations and idolatries of the inhabitants of *Jeruſalem*, commands the miniſters of his vengeance to deſtroy them; but to ſpare the good men that were ſtill among them, ſetting a mark on their foreheads. And as the prophet took occaſion to aſk God, whether he would utterly deſtroy the *Jews*; he anſwered, that he would ſpare them no longer.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter engages us to make theſe three reflections. I. We are carefully to conſider the command which God gave to the miniſters of his wrath, to

to ſlay and root out old and young, women and children: This the *Chaldeans* executed when they took *Jeruſalem*; the inhabitants of that city periſhed in a miſerable manner, by famine, by fire and ſword, the enemies being regardleſs of every age, ſex or condition. This is a terrible inſtance of the wrath of God, which ought to inſpire us with a dread of his judgments. II. We ſhould ſeriouſly reflect upon the order which God gave his angel, to mark and ſpare all ſuch as grieved and ſighed becauſe of the abominations that were committed in *Jeruſalem.* Theſe words repreſent the character of good men, and of God's elect, who afflict themſelves at the ſight of other mens ſins. We may alſo obſerve here, how dear to God zealous and pious perſons are; what care he takes of them, and how he ſpares them when he puniſhes the ungodly. The ſame promiſes are made in Holy Scripture to all God's faithful ſervants, and to thoſe who ſhall keep themſelves undefiled in the midſt of the corruptions of the world. Laſtly, it is to be well conſidered, that when *Ezekiel* enquired of God, whether he would deſtroy his people, God anſwered, that the ſins of the *Jews* were too great not to be avenged; that they had carried their impiety ſo far as to ſay, *The Lord hath forſaken the land, and the Lord ſeeth not;* and therefore that he would have no pity on them. When men have arrived to a certain degree of wickedneſs; when they have loſt all fear of God, and every thing is in the utmoſt diſorder, God is, as it were, obliged to execute juſtice, and his mercy gives place to his vengeance.

CHAP. X.

THIS chapter continues the viſion related in the two former chapters. *Ezekiel* ſaw an appearance, like that which he had already ſeen, which is deſcribed in the beginning of this Book; but this laſt appearance was attended with two particular circumſtances; one was, that the prophet ſaw an angel ſcattering burning coals over the city of *Jeruſalem;* and the other, that he

he ſaw the glory of God depart from the temple and from the city.

REFLECTIONS.

GOD was pleaſed the viſion, which *Ezekiel* had ſeen at the beginning of his miniſtry, ſhould be repeated, to confirm his predictions, and to ſhew ſtill more expreſsly that *Jeruſalem* would ſhortly be burnt and deſtroyed, and the temple deprived of God's preſence and protection. The coals of fire which the angel ſcattered over the city, ſignified, that it ſhould be burnt by the *Chaldeans*. It is ſaid, that the angel took theſe coals from between the cherubims, by the command of God, to ſhew that this deſtruction proceeded from the Lord. The prophet ſaw particularly the glory of the Lord go up from the cherubims, and light upon the door of the ſanctuary, and from thence upon the door of the court; which ſhewed, that God was going to withdraw himſelf from that place. This is the general deſign or meaning of this viſion; which is a lively repreſentation of the ſevere vengeance which God was going very ſhortly to take of the *Jews*, for the ſins committed in *Jeruſalem*, and their profaning the temple and the ſervice of God.

CHAP. XI.

THIS chapter is a continuation of the former, in which *Ezekiel* finiſhes his account of the viſion he had ſeen. I. God informs him, that the inhabitants of *Jeruſalem* would ſoon experience his moſt ſevere judgments, though they thought they had nothing to fear; of which the ſudden death of *Petaliah*, one of the princes of the people, was a ſign. II. The prophet declares, that though the *Jews* who were as *Jeruſalem*, thought they ſhould dwell in their own country, rather than thoſe who were already captives at *Babylon*; yet that theſe ſhould be recalled, and that God would bleſs all among them that ſhould truly turn to him. III. After this, the prophet ſaw the glory of the Lord, which

which had reſted upon the door of the court of the temple, withdraw entirely from the city; which ſignified that it would ſoon be forſaken by God. This viſion being ended, the prophet told the viſion to the *Jews* in *Chaldea*.

REFLECTIONS.

WE find by this chapter, that there were at *Jeruſalem*, juſt before the deſtruction of that city, very many, even among the chief men, who ſcoffed at the threatenings of the prophet, and gave the people pernicious counſel. This ſpirit of infidelity and irreligion is always a forerunner of the divine vengeance, eſpecially when thoſe who are in authority are infected. This God teſtified, when he declared, that he knew all the thoughts of thoſe rebellious and unbelieving *Jews;* and that he would cauſe the ſword to come upon them. From thence we likewiſe learn, that God knows diſtinctly all the actions, and all the thoughts of men, and that he judges them all according to their works. The ſimilitude of a caldron, or pot in which fleſh is boiled, ſignified, that part of the inhabitants of *Jeruſalem* ſhould periſh in that city, and that the reſt ſhould be taken from thence, and put to death in the land of *Iſrael*, and in other places, by their enemies. The promiſes which God adds to theſe threatenings, in behalf of the *Jews* that were captives in *Chaldea*, declaring he would bring them again into the land of *Iſrael*, ſhew, that God is merciful and gracious, even when he is diſplaying his ſevereſt judgments; but they prove at the ſame time, that he exerciſes his goodneſs only towards ſuch ſinners as have a new heart and a new ſpirit, and fear his name; and that to thoſe who follow their own irregular affections, he renders according to their deſerts. Laſtly, we here ſee, that the glory of the Lord, which had withdrawn from the ſanctuary, afterwards from the temple, and at length forſook the city entirely, implied, that God was going utterly to forſake *Jeruſalem* and its inhabitants.

CHAP. XII.

I. GOD commands the prophet to go out of his houſe at the beginning of the night with his face covered; which was to ſhew, that *Zedekiah* the king ſhould fly from *Jeruſalem* by night; that he ſhould be taken by the *Chaldeans*, and be carried to *Babylon*; that he ſhould die in that city, but ſhould not ſee it, becauſe his eyes would be put out. II. The prophet likewiſe foretels the deſtruction and captivity of the people of *Jeruſalem*. Laſtly, he declares, by order of God, that the threatenings of the Lord's prophets were ſhortly to be put in execution, though the *Jews* imagined they would not be fulfilled of a long time.

REFLECTIONS.

I. WE meet in this chapter with a very clear repreſentation of all that was ſhortly to happen to king *Zedekiah* and the *Jews*, when *Jeruſalem* ſhould be taken by the *Chaldeans*; namely, that that prince ſhould fall into the hand of his enemies; that he ſhould attempt to fly by night from *Jeruſalem;* that he ſhould be taken, and have his eyes put out; that he ſhould go to *Babylon*, but not ſee it; that the princes of *Jeruſalem* ſhould be ſlain; and that the people ſhould be carried into captivity. This prediction, which was literally and in every circumſtance fulfilled, proves very clearly, that God has a perfect knowledge of futurity, and that all things are directed by his providence. God gave the *Jews* in *Chaldea* notice of all this, that they might not envy the condition of their brethren who were ſtill in *Jeruſalem*. II. It is to be obſerved, that God here declares, he was reſolved to diſperſe the *Jews* among the nations, that the abominations and the ſins with which they had provoked him to wrath might be known among them. This ſhews, that God diſpenſes his corrections with juſtice; and that the end which he propoſes in chaſtiſing men, is to bring them to a confeſſion of their ſins, and to repentance,

and

and at the ſame time to make them ſerve for an example to others. III. Another thing this chapter teaches us is, that the *Jews*, though they were extremely guilty, and upon the point of periſhing, lived in profound ſecurity; that they did not apprehend the threatenings of the prophets, or at leaſt believed it would be a long while before the threatenings would be accompliſhed; which ſecurity of theirs made them impatient, and occaſioned their utter deſtruction. It is a dangerous thing to flatter ourſelves when God threatens us, and to defer our converſion when he ſends us warning of our danger; but a ſalutary dread, attended with a ſpeedy converſion, is the ſure and only way to prevent his judgments.

CHAP. XIII.

EZEKIEL denounces the judgments of God againſt thoſe prophets and propheteſſes who falſely pretended to divine inſpiration, and promiſed peace to the people of *Iſrael*, at a time when there was no peace for them, and they were going to be deſtroyed; and he threatens alſo ſuch as ſhould hearken to theſe falſe prophets, with the ſame miſeries.

REFLECTIONS.

THE deſtruction of *Jeruſalem* fully verified all that *Ezekiel* had ſaid in this chapter, and the event ſhewed, that thoſe prophets who deſired to perſuade the people that no harm would happen to them, were impoſtors, and that *Ezekiel* was really ſent to them from God. From hence we are to learn two things: I. That the miniſters of the Lord commit a very great ſin, and expoſe themſelves to a dreadful condemnation, when, inſtead of boldly reproving impenitent ſinners, and threatening them with the anger of God, they ſoothe them in their crimes, and fill them with a falſe confidence. The prophet expreſſes the ſin of theſe falſe teachers, ſaying, that they ſeduced the people, promiſing them *peace when there was no peace; that they daubed the wall*

with untempered mortar; and that they ſewed pillows to all armholes. This ſhould be a powerful engagement to all thoſe who are called to the ſacred miniſtry, to diſcharge the will of God faithfully, leſt if they flatter ſinners with vain and groundleſs promiſes, they expoſe themſelves likewiſe to the divine vengeance. II. Since God threatens the people with his judgments, for hearkening to falſe prophets, it is evident, that thoſe who ſuffer themſelves to be deceived, ſhall likewiſe bear the puniſhment of their iniquities; especially if they have, as the *Jews* had, means to be inſtructed in the will of God and their duty. It follows likewiſe from hence, that as we ought to ſhun falſe teachers and ſeducers, ſo ought we to love and hearken to thoſe who with zeal and ſincerity diſcharge their duty.

CHAP. XIV.

I. THIS chapter contains complaints and threatenings againſt the hypocritical *Jews*, who made as if they deſired to learn the will of God, and to conſult his prophets, whilſt they worſhipped idols, and hearkened to falſe prophets rather than to the true ſervants of God. *Ezekiel* tells them, the Lord was going to diſplay his moſt ſevere vengeance on the ſeducers, and them that hearkened to them. II. God declares, that when he ſhould reſolve to puniſh a country by any of his plagues, the good in that country might be preſerved, but could not ſave others; by which God meant to ſhew, that the ruin of the *Jews* was inevitable; that he had reſolved to diſplay all his ſore judgments at once upon them; and that the ſmall number of good men that remained among them ſhould not ſecure them.

REFLECTIONS.

I. IT appears from this chapter, that it is groſs impiety and hypocriſy to pretend to inquire of the Lord, and to attend to his word, while our heart is far from him, and we are reſolved to perſevere in our ſins.

II. That

II. That when God has ſufficiently made known his will to men, and they, notwithſtanding, err from the right way, obſtinately following their own wills and imaginations, he in his juſt judgment forſakes them; and then meeting with ſeducers they give ear to lies rather than the truth. Thus it happened to the *Jews*; inſtead of following the wholeſome counſels God had given them by his prophets, they adhered to impoſtors, and periſhed with them when *Jeruſalem* was taken, as *Ezekiel* had threatened them. It is a dangerous thing to hearken to any other voice than that of God; who will juſtly puniſh both thoſe who ſeduce others, and thoſe who ſuffer themſelves to be ſeduced. There are ſeveral important inſtructions to be drawn from the ſecond part of this chapter. We here learn, that the ſword, famine, peſtilence, and other the like calamities, are the puniſhments which God makes uſe of againſt countries and nations. But above all, let us ſeriouſly conſider what is here ſaid of *Noah*, *Daniel*, and *Job*, thoſe holy men, ſo acceptable in the ſight of God, that if they were among a people whom God had determined to deſtroy, they could not prevent their deſtruction. The interceſſion of good men prevaileth much, but is not always effectual for others; however, God takes care of his own elect, and exempts them, from thoſe puniſhments and miſeries to which the wicked and ſinners are expoſed. It appears from this chapter, that *Daniel* was already become illuſtrious for his piety, among thoſe who were carried captives to *Babylon* with king *Jehoiakim*. See *Dan.* i. 1—6.

CHAP. XV.

GOD repreſents the total deſtruction of the *Jews*, by the ſimilitude of a vine branch, which is fit for nothing but to be burnt.

REFLECTIONS.

WE have here an emblem of the total deſtruction of the *Jews*, who were to be conſumed by the fire of God's

God's wrath; and likewiſe of the cauſe of their ruin, which were the ſins and iniquities of that people, who were like a barren vine and unprofitable branch. Our Lord makes uſe of the ſame ſimilitude to repreſent what the wicked have reaſon to expect, when he ſays, *If any man abide not in me, he is caſt forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gathereth them, and caſt them into the fire, and they are burned.* And *John* the Baptiſt denounced the ſame puniſhment againſt the unbelievers, in theſe words; *Every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down, and caſt into the fire.*

CHAP. XVI.

EZEKIEL makes uſe of the parable of an adulterous woman, to ſhew that God had choſen the *Jews*, and had heaped his favours upon them; but they had dealt very treacherouſly againſt him, and particularly by their idolatry had broken the covenant he had made with them. He reproaches the *Jews* of *Jeruſalem*, for imitating, and even exceeding *Samaria*, that is, the *Iſraelites* of the ten tribes, in their idolatrous worſhip; and for defiling themſelves with the abominations of the *Egyptians*, *Aſſyrians*, and *Chaldeans*; he compares them to *Sodom*, which he calls their ſiſter; and he threatens them with a dreadful and inevitable deſtruction; promiſing, however, that God would have compaſſion on part of them, and after he had humbled them, would receive them again into covenant with him.

REFLECTIONS.

WHAT we read in this chapter repreſents the ſin of thoſe who have been received into covenant with God, and highly favoured, and notwithſtanding this, fall into ingratitude and unbelief, caſting off the obedience they owe to him, which the ſcripture calls ſpiritual adultery; to ſhew that men, by acting thus, break the covenant they had made with God. From God's

God's ſevere reproaches of the *Jews* for not only imitating, but even ſurpaſſing *Samaria* and *Sodom* in their wickedneſs, we learn, that none are more guilty than thoſe who have the greateſt ſhare of the divine favours, and have abuſed them; and that none are more ſeverely puniſhed than they. It is, however, to be remarked, that God declares, that after he had exerciſed his vengeance upon the rebellious and idolatrous *Jews*, he would remember his covenant, and pardon thoſe who ſhould be converted. The deſign of temporal judgments is to bring men to repentance, and therefore as ſoon as they are truly humbled. God is appeaſed; which is a proof of his goodneſs, at the ſame time that he is giving marks of his juſtice.

CHAP. XVII.

FOR the right underſtanding of this chapter, it muſt be obſerved, that when the king of *Babylon* carried *Jeconiah*, the king of *Judah*, into *Chaldea*, with part of the *Jews*, he ſet *Zedekiah* over thoſe that were left at *Jeruſalem*, and made him ſwear fidelity to him: but *Zedekiah* broke his oath; rebelled againſt the king of *Babylon*, and made an alliance with the king of *Egypt*, and applied to him for aſſiſtance. *Ezekiel* propheſies in this chapter, that God would puniſh *Zedekiah* for his perjury, and would deliver him up to the *Babylonians*, with all his people. This the prophet repreſents by the ſimilitude of an eagle and a cedar, which himſelf explains.

REFLECTIONS.

WE here ſee *Zedekiah*'s ſin, in breaking the oath of fidelity which he had taken to the king of *Babylon*, and applying to the *Egyptians* for aſſiſtance; and we ſee likewiſe, how *Zedekiah* was puniſhed for his perfidiouſneſs, when God delivered him into the hand of the *Babylonians*, who carried him into captivity. From whence we may learn, that perjury is one of the greateſt crimes that can be committed; that this ſin brings

brings down the divine vengeance, not only upon private perſons, but upon whole nations; eſpecially when it is committed by them that are ſet in authority over others. *Ezekiel* declares, that God will recompence the oath that is broken upon the head of him that hath broken it, which *Zedekiah* experienced the truth of. This chapter teaches us, moreover, that God does not bleſs thoſe means, which perjured and unrighteous men have recourſe to; and that it is in vain to fly to men, when we have ſinned againſt God. *Zedekiah* thought to meet with help from the *Egyptians* againſt the king of *Babylon*; and by this means he engaged this prince to make war againſt him, and try him as a perjured perſon. It is added at the end of this chapter, that God would plant a branch of cedar upon the mountain of *Iſrael*, which ſhould grow and become a great cedar, and the birds of the air ſhould dwell under it. The meaning of which was, that *Zorobabel*, a prince of the royal family of *Judah*, ſhould bring the *Jews* from their captivity in *Babylon*.

CHAP. XVIII.

THE prophet refutes the murmurings of the captive *Jews*, who complained, that God had puniſhed them for the ſins of their fathers. Whereupon he declares, I. That God did not impute to the children the ſins which their fathers had committed, but that every one ſhould bear the puniſhment of his own faults. This he explains at large, and ſets in the cleareſt light: To which he adds, to convince the *Jews* of the unreaſonableneſs of their complaints, II. That God deſired nothing but their ſalvation, and that he was ready to pardon them as ſoon as they ſincerely repented; and he exhorts the *Jews* with great warmth, to acknowledge the righteouſneſs of God, and to be converted. There are many important inſtructions contained in this chapter, which ought to be read with great attention.

REFLECTIONS.

THE uſe we are to make of this chapter is, I. To learn from hence never to murmur againſt God when he afflicts us, nor to imitate the impiety of the *Jews*, who complained that God puniſhed them for the ſins of their fathers, and ſaid, that the ways of God are not equal. II. God ſays very clearly in this chapter, and repeats it ſeveral times expreſsly, that children ſhall not bear the iniquity of their fathers, but that the ſoul which has ſinned ſhall die. To confirm this, God declares, that if a good man has a wicked ſon, the ſon ſhall die becauſe of his ſins; and if a wicked man has a good ſon, the ſon ſhall live, and the father ſhall die. This doctrine teaches us, that God is perfectly juſt as well as good; and that he never condemns men for any but their own ſins, though it ſometimes happens that the children are involved in the temporal evils, with which God puniſhes the ſins which their fathers have committed. III. God ſhews, in this chapter, that he is infinitely good, always ready to pardon even thoſe who have committed the greateſt crimes; ſuch are idolatry, injuſtice, and other ſins there mentioned; provided they forſake them, and for the future keep his commandments. This aſſurance is given us in theſe words; *Repent, and turn yourſelves from all your tranſgreſſion, ſo iniquity ſhall not be your ruin. Make you a new heart, and a new ſpirit; for why will you die, O ye houſe of Iſrael? For I have no pleaſure in the death of him that dieth: Wherefore turn yourſelves and live.* This great mercy of God ſhould ſtrongly excite us to repentance when we have offended him. IV. We here ſee the abſolute neceſſity of repentance, and learn at the ſame time, that the repentance to which God joins the promiſe of pardon, is that kind of repentance which withdraws a man from ſin, which leads him, as it is ſeveral times repeated in this chapter, to repair the evil he has done by reſtitution, and by all other poſſible means. In one word, the Lord declares, there is no repentance

effectual

effectual but that which produces a new heart, and a change of inclinations, followed by actual amendment and reformation.

CHAP. XIX.

EZEKIEL propoſes two emblems; one of a lioneſs and her whelps, and the other of a vine and its branches; by which the prophet denotes what befel the princes of the royal family of *Judah*, and in particular *Jehoahaz*, who was carried into *Egypt*, and *Jehoiakim*, who was taken, put in chains, and carried to *Babylon*.

REFLECTIONS.

IN the 36th chapter of the Second Book of *Chronicles*, we find that the latter kings of *Judah* felt the miſeries which the prophet here denounces. God, who rules all things with wiſdom and juſtice, is in a particular manner the diſpoſer of kings, putting down one, and ſetting up another, as he pleaſeth, and generally making them and their families public examples of his vengeance on thoſe ſins they have been guilty of.

CHAP. XX.

I. THE prophet, that he might prevail upon the *Jews* to fear God, and above all, to forſake their idolatry, repreſents to their elders, who came to conſult him, the many favours God had conferred on them, in chooſing them and giving them his laws. II. He reproaches them for their continual breach of God's commandments, and ſerving idols ever ſince they came out of *Egypt*, both in the wilderneſs and the land of *Canaan*. III. Becauſe they continued to provoke God, as their fathers had done, the prophet declares, God would pour out all his wrath upon them. He promiſes, however, that God would have compaſſion upon ſome of them, and would bring them again to *Jeruſalem*.

REFLEC-

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter preſents us with a detail of the favours God had conferred on the *Jews*, in chooſing them for his people, and giving them his laws, and bearing ſo long with them. We here likewiſe ſee how ungrateful they were for God's mercies, how inſenſible of his warnings, his long-ſuffering, and even of his puniſhments; for which reaſon his moſt ſevere judgments were ſhortly to overtake them. This ſhould lead us to conſider, that God has done infinitely more for us than for the *Jews*; he has redeemed us by *Jeſus Chriſt*; he has given us the knowledge of his holy laws, by which we may obtain life; and the warnings he gives us, to engage us to ſerve and fear him, are not leſs expreſs, nor leſs frequent, than thoſe addreſſed to his ancient people. If, after all, we ſhould fall into infidelity and diſobedience, we ſhould be infinitely more blameworthy than the *Jews*, and our puniſhment too would be much more ſevere. The promiſes which God makes to gather the *Jews* together again in the land of their forefathers, after they ſhould have acknowledged their ſins, and been puniſhed for them, ſhew God's love to his church, and his deſign in correcting men; which is to humble and convert them, and make them the objects of his mercy.

CHAP. XXI.

THIS chapter has two parts; in the firſt of which *Ezekiel* repreſents, under the type of a fire conſuming wood, and of a drawn ſword, the deſtruction and ruin of *Jeruſalem*. In the ſecond he ſays, that the king of *Babylon* ſhould conſult the magicians by lot, to know whether he ſhould make war againſt the *Ammonites*, or againſt the *Jews*; and that God would cauſe the lot to fall in ſuch a manner, that the *Jews* ſhould be deſtroyed firſt; and that *Zedekiah* their king, who is here called a profane and wicked prince, ſhould receive the puniſhment of his perfidiouſneſs, after

after which the *Ammonites* ſhould be conquered and deſtroyed.

REFLECTIONS.

THE firſt part of this chapter ſets before our eyes, under the ſimilitude of a devouring fire, and of a drawn ſword, which ſpares none, the diſmal and unavoidable effects of the divine vengeance, when men provoke God by their ſins. In the ſecond part we ſee, how the king of *Babylon*, having conſulted his idols, caſt the lot, to know whether he ſhould go againſt *Jeruſalem*, or againſt the *Ammonites*, though the manner in which the king of *Babylon* choſe to determine him what courſe he ſhould take, was ſuch, yet God was pleaſed ſo to direct it, that he turned firſt againſt *Jeruſalem*. This teaches us very plainly, that God governs all things by his providence; that he even preſides over the lot, and over ſuch events as we imagine to depend upon mere chance, and in general over all the actions of men; ſo that men, without knowing it, execute what he has reſolved to do or permit. We are further to conſider the ruin of the *Jews*, and eſpecially the exemplary puniſhment of king *Zedekiah*, as a proof, that ſinful nations, and chiefly wicked princes, do at laſt meet with divine vengeance: and the deſtruction of the *Ammonites*, who were ſpared at firſt, but deſtroyed by *Nebuchadnezzar*, five years after he had taken *Jeruſalem*, ſhews, that if God forbears chaſtizing the guilty for a time, they ſhall not eſcape his judgment.

CHAP. XXII.

EZEKIEL propheſies againſt *Jeruſalem*; he mentions the crimes that were there committed, ſuch as idolatry, contempt of parents, injuſtice, oppreſſion, murder, profanation of the divine ſervice, adultery, bribes, corruption, and extortion; and ſays, that theſe crimes would cauſe the total ruin of *Jeruſalem*, and of that whole nation. But he complains, above all,

all, that the prophets, the prieſts, and the magiſtrates, abandoned themſelves to all kind of iniquity; and that no-one endeavoured to put a ſtop to the wrath of God, which was ready to fall upon that people.

REFLECTIONS.

THERE are two things chiefly to be obſerved in this chapter: I. An enumeration of the crimes that reigned in *Jeruſalem*, a little before it was taken and deſtroyed by the *Babylonians*. The *Jews* had given themſelves up to idolatry, injuſtice, uncleanneſs, and to abominations of every kind, and had profaned religion and the ſervice of God in the moſt ſhocking manner. This it was that deprived them of the divine protection, and obliged God to put his threatenings in execution. Theſe ſins, no doubt, God does ſtill abhor, and much more in Chriſtians, and will never fail to puniſh thoſe who do ſuch things. II. The next thing to be obſerved here is, that God does particularly complain of perſons in a public character; that the prophet ſeduced the people; that the prieſts broke the law, and profaned holy things; and that the magiſtrates were addicted to injuſtice, diſhoneſt gain, fraud, and violence. From theſe complaints, which God ſo frequently makes, we may learn, that when the rulers of the church and the civil magiſtrates are without religion and virtue, impiety and corruption muſt needs make great havock, and we can expect nothing but the utmoſt miſery. Paſtors and governors ought ſeriouſly to conſider this, that they may not be the authors of corruption, and of public calamities, nor occaſion the eternal perdition of thoſe that God has ſet them over.

CHAP. XXIII.

THIS chapter contains the parable of two ſiſters that lived in whoredom, who repreſent the two kingdoms of *Iſrael*; that is, the kingdom of *Samaria*, or of the ten tribes, which had firſt forſaken the worſhip

ſhip of God and ſet up idolatry, and the kingdom of *Judah*, which had herein imitated the ten tribes. The Lord declares, that as thoſe tribes had been given into the hands of the *Aſſyrians* for their idolatry; ſo the men of *Judah*, who had been witneſſes of the puniſhment of their brethren, and inſtead of taking warning by it, had ſurpaſſed them in wickedneſs, ſhould ſhortly be laid waſte by the *Chaldeans*.

REFLECTIONS.

THE complaints which God makes in this chapter, both againſt the *Iſraelites* of the ten tribes, and the men of *Judah*, leave us no room to doubt but he is particularly offended, when thoſe to whom he has made himſelf known, corrupt his worſhip, and rebel againſt him. What is here ſaid, under the ſimilitude of adultery, ſhews, that they who are thus unfaithful to God, break his covenant, and expoſe themſelves to the moſt dreadful effects of his wrath; and ſince God declares himſelf much more incenſed againſt the *Jews* of *Jeruſalem*, among whom his worſhip had been preſerved, than againſt thoſe of the ten tribes; we may from hence learn, that rebellion againſt God, in thoſe who have been diſtinguiſhed by peculiar privileges, is ſtill more odious than in others.

CHAP. XXIV.

I. GOD reveals to *Ezekiel*, who was then in *Chaldea*, that upon that very day the king of *Babylon* had laid ſiege to *Jeruſalem*; and orders him to repreſent the deſtruction of that city by the type of a caldron in which fleſh was boiled, and afterwards made red-hot. II. That ſame day *Ezekiel*'s wife died, but God forbids him to weep, or to uſe any tokens of mourning, to ſhew, that the deſolation of *Jeruſalem* would be ſo great and general, that huſbands and wives, parents and children, and all the neareſt relations, could not be able to lament the death of each other.

REFLECTIONS.

WHAT we are to conſider in this chapter is, I. That although *Ezekiel* was in *Chaldea*, and very far from *Jeruſalem*, God made known to him the very day in which the king of *Babylon* had begun the ſiege of *Jeruſalem*; by which it appears, that God perfectly knows all that paſſes in the world. II. The type of a caldron in which fleſh is boiled, and which when empty was put upon the fire again to take away its ſcum, ſignified, according to the explanation God gave of that ſimilitude, that the wrath of God was going to be poured upon *Jeruſalem*, and upon all its inhabitants, and that his wrath is a conſuming fire. III. We muſt obſerve, that *Jeruſalem* was treated in this manner, becauſe it was defiled and full of abominations; in it blood had been ſpilt, and its inhabitants committed all manner of wickedneſs, and remained utterly incorrigible. God proportions men's puniſhments to their ſins, and to the condition they are in, and proceeds to extremities, and makes uſe of the moſt ſevere puniſhments, when their obſtinacy is inſurmountable. IV. God's forbidding the prophet to weep for the death of his wife, though ſhe was dear to him, was to ſhew the captive *Jews* how dreadful the ruin of their brethren in *Judea* would be, ſince their dead ſhould not be ſo much as lamented; and *Ezekiel*'s obedience to the command, which muſt needs be grievous to him, ſhews, that we muſt ſacrifice what is deareſt to us when God commands; and that the intereſt of his glory ſhould more nearly concern us than our own private intereſt.

CHAP. XXV.

EZEKIEL foretels, that the *Ammonites*, the *Moabites*, *Edomites*, and *Philiſtines*, who were neighbours and enemies to the *Jews*, ſhould be ſoon deſtroyed, becauſe they had rejoiced at the ruin of *Jeruſalem*,

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REFLECTIONS.

THESE three things are to be conſidered in this chapter: I. That *Ezekiel*, after he had foretold the deſtruction of *Jeruſalem*, and of the *Jews*, denounces the divine vengeance againſt their enemies. This ſhews that God is righteous, and if he puniſhes and corrects his own people, neither will he ſpare the enemies of his church. II. That the deſtruction of the *Ammonites*, *Moabites*, *Edomites*, and *Philiſtines*, happened ſoon after the taking of *Jeruſalem*, thoſe people being ſubdued by the king of *Babylon*, agreeable to the threatenings denounced againſt them by *Ezekiel*, *Iſaiah*, and *Jeremiah*. III. The next conſideration is, that God diſplayed his judgments againſt thoſe people, becauſe they had provoked him, and to puniſh their pride and inhumanity in inſulting the *Jews* in the time of their calamity. It is a great ſin to rejoice at the miſeries of other men, and to be hard and cruel to ſuch as are in affliction; and God ſeverely and juſtly puniſhes thoſe that are ſo; as, on the contrary, he bleſſes thoſe who are affected with the ſufferings of others, and that comfort them.

CHAP. XXVI.

THIS chapter, and the two following, are a prophecy againſt the *Tyrians*. In this *Ezekiel* foretels the deſtruction of the city of *Tyre*. He ſays, that that city, which had rejoiced to ſee *Jeruſalem* laid waſte by king *Nebuchadnezzar*, ſhould be taken, plundered, and deſtroyed by the ſame king.

CHAP. XXVII.

EZEKIEL deſcribes the great commerce of the *Tyrians* with other nations, their immenſe riches, and how aſtoniſhed every one would be at their deſtruction.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXVIII.

EZEKIEL repreſents the pride of the king of *Tyre;* he ſays, that *Sydon*, a city bordering upon *Tyre*, ſhould likewiſe be deſtroyed; and he promiſes the *Jews*, that they ſhould return from their captivity, and dwell again in their own land.

REFLECTIONS *on chap.* XXVI, XXVII, XXVIII.

ON the twenty-ſixth, and two following chapters, obſerve, that though the city of *Tyre* was exceeding powerful, by reaſon of its ſituation on the ſea-ſhore, its extenſive commerce, its immenſe riches, and its alliance with almoſt all the nations of the world, as we read in the twenty-ſeventh chapter; yet it was very ſoon to be delivered into the hands of the king of *Babylon*, who would take it, and ſpoil it of all its glory. In truth, a little after this prophecy, *Nebuchadnezzar* took the city of *Tyre*, after a ſiege of thirteen years, and deſtroyed it in ſuch a manner, that it was not rebuilt; for the new city of *Tyre* was not built in the ſame place where the ancient city ſtood. One cannot avoid conſidering this event as the work of God; eſpecially if we reflect, that it had been foretold, with all its circumſtances, not only by the prophet *Ezekiel*, eighteen years beforehand; but alſo by *Iſaiah*, above an hundred and twenty years before. Moreover, we are to aſcribe this deſtruction of *Tyre* to the idolatry that prevailed in it, to the pride and luxury which great riches had introduced, and to the hatred which the *Tyrians* bore to the *Jews*. Thus Providence humbles the moſt powerful ſtates, and the moſt flouriſhing cities, to reſtrain the impiety, pride, injuſtice, luxury, diſſoluteneſs, and other crimes, which uſually attend plenty and proſperity. Laſtly, We are to take notice, that when *Ezekiel* denounces the judgments of God againſt the idolatrous nations, as well as againſt the *Jews*, he does not promiſe that they ſhould be reſtored, as the people of God had reaſon to hope. This

muſt adminiſter comfort to the captive *Jews*, engage them to fly to God by repentance, and convince them that God watched over them, and would not fail to cauſe them to return from the *Babyloniſh* captivity.

CHAP. XXIX.

THIS and the three following chapters are a prophecy againſt the *Egyptians*. The prophet having foretold the overthrow of *Tyre* in the preceding chapters, in this denounces the deſtruction of *Egypt*, which ſhould likewiſe be ſubdued by the king of *Babylon*, after he had taken *Tyre*. However, *Ezekiel* foretels, that at the end of forty years, the *Egyptians* ſhould return into their own country, but ſhould be there in a very abject condition.

CHAP. XXX.

EZEKIEL continues his prophecy againſt *Egypt*, and ſays, that the principal cities of that kingdom, which are mentioned by name in this chapter, ſhould be deſtroyed with their idols.

CHAP. XXXI.

THE prophet repreſents, by the compariſon of a fine large cedar, that the *Aſſyrian* monarchy had even been more powerful than the *Egyptians*, and yet had come to an end; and that it ſhould be ſo with the latter.

CHAP. XXXII.

THIS chapter is a lamentation for the deſtruction of *Egypt*, which ſhould be reduced to the ſame condition as the *Perſians*, the *Edomites*, and the other nations, who were likewiſe to be conquered by the *Babylonians*.

REFLECTIONS *on chap.* xxix, xxx, xxxi, xxxii.

ON theſe chapters we are to conſider, I. That God thought fit to foretel by *Ezekiel*, and by the other prophets, the deſtruction of *Egypt*, that the *Jews* might acknowledge that the God whom they worſhipped was the ſupreme Lord of the univerſe, and of all nations, and that they had in vain put their confidence in the *Egyptians*. II. It is remarkable, that *Ezekiel* ſays, expreſsly, that God would deliver *Egypt* to *Nebuchadnezzar*, as a reward for executing his judgments on the city of *Tyre*; that the *Egyptians* ſhould be diſperſed; that in forty years they ſhould return to *Egypt*; but that their kingdom ſhould not be reſtored to them in its former condition, being brought very low. All this was literally fulfilled: *Nebuchadnezzar* became maſter of *Egypt* after he had taken the city of *Tyre*; the *Egyptians* were carried into captivity; and at the end of ſome years they returned into their own country, under *Amaſis* their king; but the kingdom of *Egypt* did not recover its former ſplendor, and was afterwards kept low and made ſubject to foreign princes, as *Ezekiel* had foretold. To compare theſe prophecies with the event, is very proper, to convince us that God was the author of them, that the Holy Scripture is divinely inſpired, and that nothing is more certainly true than the doctrines contained in it.

CHAP. XXXIII.

THERE are four things to be conſidered in this chapter: I. God inſtructs the prophet in the duties of his office, and the obligation he was under to warn ſinners. II. To ſtop the murmurings of the *Jews*, he declares, that he deſires not the death of the wicked, and that repenting ſinners ſhould be received to mercy; as, on the other hand, the righteous, who forſake the ways of righteouſneſs, ſhall die in their ſin. III. *Ezekiel* received the news of the taking of *Jeruſalem*,

and foretels the deſtruction of thoſe *Jews* that remained in *Judea*. IV. God complains of the hypocriſy of the *Jews* that were at *Babylon*, who came to hear *Ezekiel*, but would not do that which he commanded them in the name of God. This is one of the moſt inſtructive chapters in the whole Book.

REFLECTIONS.

THAT we may improve by this chapter, we muſt conſider as follows: I. The compariſon of a centinel, or watchman, whereby God repreſents the duties of *Ezekiel*'s office, ſhews with what fidelity the paſtors of the church ought to warn ſinners, and labour with their utmoſt ſtrength to recover them from the error of their ways, if they would not be reſponſible for the ruin of their ſouls; and it likewiſe proves, that if ſinners do not amend, when they are ſo warned, their deſtruction will be juſt. II. We have here one of the moſt expreſs declarations of the infinite mercy of God, that is to be found in the whole Scripture. God ſwears by himſelf, that he would not by any means the death of the wicked; that he deſires nothing but their converſion and life, and receives them graciouſly as ſoon as they return to him. The conſideration of God's great mercy ſhould fill ſinners with confidence, and engage them to repent, and thereby prevent their ruin. III. *Ezekiel* teaches us, that God has no reſpect in his judgment, but to the good and evil which every man has done; and that as ſinners, who change their courſe of life, ſhall obtain mercy, ſo likewiſe the righteous, if they forſake their righteouſneſs, ſhall die in their ſin. What God ſays in ſo clear and expreſs a manner on this head, ſets his unbounded goodneſs towards men in a clear light, as well as his unſpotted juſtice; and this doctrine ought to ſtop the mouths of hardened ſinners, and inſpire good men with a wholeſome fear. IV. We have a remarkable inſtance of the juſtice of God, and of the truth of his threatenings, in the taking of *Jeruſalem*, and in the calamities, that

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fell upon the *Jews* that ſtill remained in *Judea*. However, it is to be remarked, that thoſe *Jews*, though guilty of all manner of wickedneſs, and even of idolatry, flattered themſelves till then, that they ſhould remain in their own land, and continue to poſſeſs it. Thus ſinners imagine they have nothing to fear, when they are the object of God's wrath, and his vengeance is going to take hold of them. Laſtly, God reproaches the *Jews* for coming to hear the prophet *Ezekiel*, and not doing what he ſaid which teaches us, that it is downright hypocriſy, and the moſt criminal contempt, to hear the word of God, and not practiſe what it preſcribes.

CHAP. XXXIV.

THIS chapter contains two things: I. Threatenings againſt falſe ſhepherds; that is to ſay, againſt the prophets and magiſtrates, who, inſtead of taking care of the flock and ſheep of the Lord, are the occaſion of their ruin. II. It contains promiſes, by which God engages to ſave his ſheep, to give them good ſhepherds; and, above all, to ſend a great Shepherd, who ſhould redeem his people, and render them eternally happy.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS is a chapter, which both magiſtrates and the rulers of the church ought to meditate upon very ſeriouſly. The complaints that God here makes of falſe ſhepherds, and the curſes he denounces againſt them, ſhew, that it is the duty of paſtors, with their utmoſt diligence, to watch over the ſheep with which they are intruſted, and to provide with care and readineſs for all their wants; and that if they fail herein, they muſt give a ſevere account to God for it. This too lays an obligation upon princes and magiſtrates, to govern faithfully and juſtly the people committed to their truſt. What befel the *Jews*, who for the unfaithfulneſs of their prophets and magiſtrates were utterly deſtroyed,

deſtroyed, ſhews, that it is the greateſt misfortune to a nation to have wicked rulers; and that all who are concerned for the glory of God, and the happineſs and edification of the church, have great reaſon to pray to God, that he would always raiſe up to his people faithful and good paſtors. As to the promiſes which God makes in this chapter, to ſave his ſheep, and to be himſelf their ſhepherd and their guide; they firſt denote the return of the *Jews* from their captivity at *Babylon* into their own country; which they did by the authority of *Cyrus*, and under the conduct of their rulers; but they more perfectly agree to *Jeſus Chriſt* our Lord, who is the great ſhepherd of the ſheep, that good ſhepherd who has laid down his life for them, who came to gather them together in his church, and will give them everlaſting life, as he himſelf has declared in the Goſpel.

CHAP. XXXV.

EZEKIEL propheſies againſt the *Edomites*, and foretels their utter deſtruction, becauſe of the great miſchiefs they had done to the *Jews*, and becauſe they had even proudly oppoſed God himſelf.

REFLECTIONS.

WE here ſee, that the *Edomites*, were to feel the divine vengeance, and that their country was to be laid waſte, becauſe they bore a mortal hatred to the people of *Iſrael*, and had not only rejoiced in their deſtruction, but had even aſſiſted in bringing it about, and had behaved with great inſolence and barbarity. Theſe menaces were not long before they were put in execution againſt the *Edomites*, their country being plundered and laid waſte by the ſame king that had deſtroyed *Jeruſalem*, and ſome time after by the *Jews*, in the time of the *Maccabees*. Thus God puniſhes thoſe who have no pity on the miſerable, and take pleaſure in doing evil to others; but eſpecially thoſe who perſecute his church.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXXVI.

I. *EZEKIEL* foretels the ruin of the *Edomites*, and the other enemies of God's people, and the reſtoration of the *Jews* to their own land. II. He ſays, that God had deſtroyed *Jeruſalem*, and ſcattered the people of *Iſrael*, becauſe of their ſins; but that the Lord would have compaſſion on them, would again cauſe them to inhabit their land, and would heap his favours upon them; and above all, that he would ſanctify them, and fill them with the knowledge and fear of his holy name: And that he would do all this for his own glory, and to convince the idolatrous nations that there was no other God but he.

REFLECTIONS.

THE reading of this chapter engages us to conſider, I. That if God formerly ſuffered his people to be oppreſſed by their enemies for a while, it was not that he deſigned to caſt them off utterly, but becauſe he was willing to purify them by affliction, and at length to manifeſt his power and juſtice in delivering them, and in puniſhing thoſe that had afflicted them. We ſhould paſs the ſame judgment on the perſecutions to which the church is expoſed, as well as on the afflictions which God diſpenſes to particular men in this life. II. The promiſe God here makes of reſtoring, protecting, and ſanctifying his people, is not confined to the deliverance of the *Jews*, and to the temporal bleſſings vouchſafed them in their land, after their return from *Babylon*; it agrees more eſpecially to the ſpiritual bleſſings that God was to beſtow firſt on the *Jews*, and afterwards on all men, in the times of the Meſſiah, and was accomplished by the coming of *Jeſus Chriſt*, the ſending of the Holy Ghoſt, and by the preaching of the Goſpel. III. What we are chiefly to conſider in theſe promiſes is, that the deſign of God in granting us theſe bleſſings was to withdraw men from ſin, to ſanctify them, and to give them a

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new heart and a new ſpirit, that they might walk in his ſtatutes, and keep his commandments. This then is what we ought chiefly to labour after; this is the end to which we ſhould apply the mercies which God vouchſafes us by the new covenant, which we have the happineſs to live under.

CHAP. XXXVII.

THIS chapter conſiſts of two parts. In the firſt, *Ezekiel* relates the viſion he had ſeen of a field covered with the bones of dead bodies that were brought to life again; by which God was pleaſed to aſſure the *Jews*, that he was able to bring them back from the captivity of *Babylon*, though there ſeemed to be no appearance of their reſtoration. In the ſecond, the prophet ſhews, by the emblem of two pieces of wood joined together, that the Lord would reunite the *Jews* of *Ephraim*, that is, of the ten tribes, and thoſe of the kingdom of *Judah*; that they ſhould make but one people, and live under one king; and that God would make an everlaſting covenant with them.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THIS viſion of *Ezekiel*, in which God ſhewed him dead bodies raiſed to life, tended to inſtruct the *Jews*, that though they were in a very deplorable condition, and there ſeemed to be no hopes of their recovery, yet God, by his infinite power, would infallibly deliver them. From whence we may gather, that nothing is impoſſible with God, and that he never wants means to accompliſh his promiſes. This viſion is likewiſe to be conſidered as a moſt expreſs type of the general reſurrection. Though our bodies are reduced to duſt, God is able to give them life again, and reunite them to our ſouls; which he will infallibly do at the laſt day, as we are moſt clearly taught in the Goſpel. *Ezekiel's* prophecy of the two nations of *Iſrael*, and of *Judah*, being one day gathered together, and united

united under one king, to ſerve God with one accord, can be but imperfectly applied to the ſtate of the *Jews* after the captivity; ſince a conſiderable part of them, eſpecially thoſe of the ten tribes, never returned into their own country, and thoſe who did return, remained there but a ſhort time, and were almoſt always under the dominion of foreign princes. This prophecy therefore muſt relate to the calling of the *Jews* under the Goſpel, their union in the church of Chriſt, and particularly their converſion, when that people ſhall embrace the Chriſtian Religion,

CHAP. XXXVIII, XXXIX.

IN theſe two chapters the prophet foretels, that the church ſhould be aſſaulted by *Gog*: by which the Holy Spirit is ſuppoſed to deſcribe the miſeries which the neighbouring kings, and in particular *Antiochus Epiphanes*, king of *Syria*, would bring upon the *Jews*, after their return from *Babylon*; the deſtruction of that cruel prince, and the glorious deliverance which God would vouchſafe his people by the *Maccabees*.

REFLECTIONS *on chapters* XXXVIII, and XXXIX.

AS the *Jews* were expoſed, ſome time after their return from the *Babyloniſh* captivity, to cruel perſecutions, particularly under the reign of *Antiochus*, king of *Syria*; God forewarned them of it by this prophecy of *Ezekiel*, and by another of *Daniel*, who likewiſe foretold the ſame event; that when theſe evils came upon them they might not be ſurpriſed. In truth, they were attacked and oppreſſed by *Antiochus*, who made war upon them, put a great number of them to death, profaned the temple at *Jeruſalem*, and for ſome time prevented the performance of divine ſervice. But in their diſtreſs they experienced the divine aſſiſtance; that prince was vanquiſhed, by the divine bleſſing upon the arms of the *Maccabees*; he became an example of divine vengeance; and the *Jews* recovered their liberty. Thus God was pleaſed

to

to try and purify his people; giving them, in the ſight of the idolatrous nations, ſignal proofs of his protection; and diſpoſing them for the reception of the Meſſiah, who was ſoon to be ſent unto them.

CHAP. XL.

IN this and the following chapter, to the end of the Book, *Ezekiel* relates a viſion which he ſaw fourteen years after the taking of *Jeruſalem*; wherein are deſcribed the temple, and the ſervice that was to be performed in it, the diviſion of the land of *Canaan* to the twelve tribes of *Iſrael*, together with a plan of a new city. Some apply this prophecy to the temple that was rebuilt after the captivity, and to the ſtate of the *Jews* at that time. But, conſidering that the ſecond temple was not built as *Ezekiel* here repreſents; that the twelve tribes did not return into their own country; that the land of *Canaan* was not divided unto them; that *Jeruſalem* was not rebuilt according to the plan laid down by *Ezekiel*; conſidering, farther, that there are laws mentioned in theſe chapters which were never obſerved by the *Jews* ſince their return, and promiſes which have not been fulfilled; others are of opinion, this viſion ſhould be explained in a ſpiritual ſenſe, and underſtand it of the Chriſtian Church. Some think it repreſents what would have happened, if the twelve tribes had been converted and turned unto God. Laſtly, There are others of opinion, that theſe predictions relate to the reſtoration of the *Jewiſh* nation in the latter times, when they ſhall be converted. As all these explanations are attended with ſeveral difficulties, it would be hard to determine the ſenſe of theſe chapters with certainty, and to make any particular reflections on them.

The end of the Book of the Prophet EZEKIEL.

THE

THE

BOOK

OF THE PROPHET

DANIEL.

ARGUMENT.

Daniel *was very remarkable for his holineſs, his great zeal, and the revelations he received. The teſtimony given of him by God, in the fourteenth and twenty-eighth chapters of* Ezekiel; *and what Jeſus Chriſt ſays of him in the Goſpel, proves that he was a very holy man, and a great prophet. He lived at* Babylon *ſix hundred years before the coming of our Lord, and was there known as a prophet all the time of the captivity, and beyond it, that is upwards of ſeventy years; ſo that he lived to a very advanced age. This Book is made up of hiſtories and remarkable prophecies. We have here the hiſtory of ſeveral conſiderable events, which happened at* Babylon, *both to the prophet* Daniel, *and to the kings of that country; and ſeveral prophecies, which deſcribe the revolutions that were to happen in the kingdoms of the world, and particularly in the ſtate of the* Jews; *as alſo the coming of the Meſſiah.*

CHAP. I.

IN this chapter we ſee how *Daniel* was brought to *Babylon*, and educated at the court of king *Nebuchadnezzar*.

REFLEC-

REFLECTIONS *after reading the chapter.*

THERE are three reflections to be made upon this firſt chapter of *Daniel.* I. The firſt is, that by the providence of God *Daniel* was carried captive to *Babylon* with the other *Jews*, was brought up at the king's court, and there became famous by his wiſdom, and by the gift of prophecy. Providence ſo diſpoſed all theſe events for the conſolation of the captive *Jews*, and to make known the true God among thoſe idolatrous people, and for the comfort and inſtruction of the church in all ages. II. We have a noble example of temperance, piety, and confidence in God, in the behaviour of *Daniel* and his three companions, who lived only upon water and pulſe, and refuſed to eat of the king's meat, becauſe the *Babylonians* ate ſome animals which it was not lawful for the *Jews* to eat, and becauſe their meat was moſt commonly offered to idols. This piety and temperance of *Daniel* and his friends, who, though they were then but young, at which time men are moſt inclined to pleaſure, and lived in an idolatrous court, greatly addicted to ſenſuality, yet kept themſelves pure and undefiled, ſhould teach all, eſpecially young perſons, and thoſe who live among the great, to ſhun luxury, to be ſober, and never to do any thing contrary to religion or their conſciences. III. We here obſerve, that God granted *Daniel*, together with bodily health, great underſtanding, and extraordinary gifts, and raiſed him to conſiderable employments. As God deſigned *Daniel* for great things, he trained him up for them from his youth, by the extraordinary gifts he beſtowed on him, and by giving him favour with the powerful prince *Nebuchadnezzar* and his ſucceſſors, till the kingdom paſſed from the *Chaldeans* to the *Perſians.* Thus God bleſſes thoſe that fear him, beſtows his favours upon ſober and pious perſons, and often grants them temporal bleſſings, as a reward of their godlineſs.

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

THIS chapter gives an account of a dream of king *Nebuchadnezzar*'s, in which he ſaw a great image compoſed of divers metals. The aſtrologers, becauſe they could not find out nor explain the dream, were condemned to death; but *Daniel* rehearſed and explained it to the king, who confeſſed that the God whom *Daniel* worſhipped was the true God; and exalted the prophet and his three friends to great honours.

REFLECTIONS.

THESE are the principal reflections to be made upon this chapter: I. That God ſent *Nebuchadnezzar* a dream, and then permitted that prince to forget it, that, when *Daniel* told him his dream, he might be the better diſpoſed to receive and believe what *Daniel* ſhould tell him, and that he might confeſs that this dream came from God, who alone knows things to come. II. The incapacity of the wiſe men of *Babylon* to find out the dream, diſcovers very plainly that thoſe people were impoſtors, and that none but the true God can diſcover hidden things. III. *Daniel*'s promiſing the king that he would tell him his dream, and explain it to him, is a proof of his ſurpriſing faith and great confidence in God, ſince, if he could not have done what he promiſed, he muſt have been put to death. And ſince God, upon the prayers of *Daniel* and his friends, revealed *Nebuchadnezzar*'s dream, we ſee that the prayers of the righteous are of great efficacy. But that which is chiefly to be obſerved is the interpretation of this dream. *Daniel* ſhews, that there ſhould be four powerful kingdoms ſucceeding one another: the firſt was that of the *Chaldeans*, which was then ſubſiſting, and of which *Nebuchadnezzar* was king, but which was ſoon to come to an end; the ſecond was that of the *Medes* and *Perſians*; and the third, the kingdom of *Alexander*

ander the Great and of the *Grecians*. As to the fourth kingdom, ſome will have it to be that of the kings of *Syria* and *Egypt*, who reigned after *Alexander* the Great; and they think what is here ſaid deſcribes what was to befal the *Jews* under theſe kings, particularly under *Antiochus Epiphanes*, the cruel perſecutor of the people of God. Others imagine the fourth to be the *Roman* empire; founding their opinion chiefly on this, that in the time of this fourth kingdom, God would eſtabliſh his kingdom by *Jeſus Chriſt*; and thus the ancients underſtood this prophecy. This is certain, that theſe empires ſucceeded each other; and after all theſe revolutions, the kingdom of God was manifeſted by our Lord *Jeſus Chriſt*. We cannot ſufficiently admire this noble prophecy, which extends to ſo many ages: It formerly ſerved, as we learn at the end of this chapter, to make the true God known among the idolaters, and to render the king of *Babylon* favourable to the *Jews*. It ought to make ſtill greater impreſſion upon us, who have ſeen the accompliſhment of this prophecy, and ſhould fully convince us, that there is a God who perfectly knows things to come. We ought alſo from hence to conclude, that the raiſing and overthrowing of kingdoms and ſtates, and the various changes that happen in the world, proceed from God's providence, who has always in view the good of the church, and of thoſe that fear him.

CHAP. III.

KING *Nebuchadnezzar* cauſes a great image of gold to be made, and commands that every one ſhould worſhip it; which the three friends of *Daniel* having refuſed to do, the king cauſed them to be thrown into the fiery furnace; but God preſerved them miraculouſly in the fire, inſomuch that *Nebuchadnezzar* being aſtoniſhed at the miracle, confeſſed, and publicly proclaimed the power of the true God.

REFLECTIONS.

IN the remarkable hiſtory here ſet down, we may obſerve theſe four things: I. The folly, pride, and impiety of *Nebuchadnezzar*, who ſet up this golden image, and commanded all his ſubjects, upon pain of death, to worſhip it. Idolatry and ſuperſtition are always cruel and extravagant, and in *Nebuchadnezzar* we have the picture of haughty, idolatrous, and perſecuting princes. II. We here ſee the admirable conſtancy and generous reſolution of the three *Hebrews*, who, without heſitating, anſwered the king, that they choſe rather to be thrown into the fiery furnace than to obey his command. This is a noble example of faith and conſtancy, which teaches us, that the fear of men will never induce good men to ſin againſt God. When their duty to God is concerned, they do not deliberate what courſe to take; but are always ready, when called to it, boldly to expoſe their lives for his glory, and in the defence of true religion. III. The *Chaldeans*, who caſt the three *Hebrews* into the furnace, were themſelves conſumed by the flames, and *Daniel*'s three friends were ſo miraculouſly preſerved by the angel of the Lord, that the fire did not do them the leaſt harm. Thus God puniſhed the cruel and idolatrous *Chaldeans*, made them feel the effects of his power, rendered the miracle wrought in behalf of the *Hebrews* more viſible and inconteſtible, and rewarded the zeal and piety of his ſervants, who expoſed their lives for his ſake. St. *Paul* particularly aſcribes this miraculous deliverance to the faith of *Daniel*'s three friends, when he ſays, *That by faith they quenched the violence of fire.* Let us from hence learn to acknowledge the great efficacy of faith; that God never wants power to deliver thoſe that ſuffer for his ſake; that he ſupports his children in their afflictions; that he is with them in the greateſt dangers, and gives them a happy iſſue out of them. Laſtly, The zeal which *Nebuchadnezzar* expreſſed for the glory of the God whom *Daniel* worſhipped, the homage he paid him,

him, and his commendation of the faith and ſtedfaſtneſs of the three *Hebrews*, ſhould lead us to acknowledge and adore the power of that great God, who alone does marvellous things, and who displays his power in behalf of thoſe who ſerve him faithfully, and put their truſt in him. The behaviour of this heathen prince ſhould engage Chriſtian princes and magiſtrates to honour God, to cauſe religion to be had in reverence, to reſtrain impiety, and not to ſuffer any inſults to be offered to the Divine Majeſty.

CHAP. IV.

THIS chapter conſiſts of three parts: I. An account of a dream, in which king *Nebuchadnezzar* ſaw a great tree, whoſe branches were lopt off. II. *Daniel*'s interpretation of the dream, who told the king that he ſhould be driven from his kingdom, and afterwards reſtored to it again. III. We ſee the accompliſhment of the dream, and of all that *Daniel* had foretold.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS hiſtory furniſhes us with many inſtructions. I. What happened to *Nebuchadnezzar*, when he was in the height of his glory, teaches us, that proſperity is a dangerous ſtate; that men eaſily fall from a ſtate of plenty and grandeur into pride and ſecurity, and that then they are moſt in danger of God's judgment; pride generally going before a fall. II. Obſerve, That as God had formerly by a dream revealed his will to *Pharaoh*, he was pleaſed likewiſe to reveal himſelf to *Nebuchadnezzar*, informing him what was to befal him, by a dream which *Daniel* interpreted; that this prince might confeſs that this humiliation proceeded from God. Thus God, in his loving-kindneſs, warns men of their approaching miſeries. and teaches them how they may avoid them. III. The counſel which *Daniel* gave the king, to *break off his ſins by righteouſneſs, and his iniquities by ſhewing mercy to the poor*, teaches

teaches us to repair, by all poſſible means, the ſins we have committed, and that works of charity have a peculiar efficacy to avert the wrath of God, when they proceed from true repentance. IV. Obſerve the puniſhment of *Nebuchadnezzar*, who was driven from his kingdom, deprived of his reaſon, and reduced to the ſtate of a brute; this prince falling into a madneſs and deep melancholy, which made him brutiſh, and for a time rendered him unfit for human ſociety. This event, which heathen hiſtorians make mention of, was diſpenſed of God, as is obſerved in this chapter, and as the king afterwards confeſſed, that men might know that the Almighty God ruleth over kings; that he does whatſoever he pleaſes; that he exalts and abaſes whom he will; and particularly, that he is juſt, and knows how to humble the proud. Laſtly, We have ſeen how *Nebuchadnezzar* recovered his ſenſes, and humbled himſelf, and gave public marks of his fear of the true God, ordering all his ſubjects to revere him, and then was reſtored to his kingdom. Thus we ſee, how God's chaſtiſements bring men to a ſenſe of their duty, and procure the return of his favour. And *Nebuchadnezzar*'s ſolemn acknowledgment of the majeſty and juſtice of God, teaches the princes and great men of the world their obligation to worſhip God, and with all their might to promote his glory.

CHAP. V.

KING *Belſhazzar* making a great feaſt, at the time *Babylon* was beſieged by the *Medes*, and profaning the ſacred veſſels of the temples of *Jeruſalem*, ſaw a hand, which wrote upon the wall the decree of his death, as *Daniel* interpreted it. This decree was executed immediately, *Belſhazzar* being ſlain that very night, and *Babylon* taken by *Darius*. By this means the monarchy of the *Chaldeans* paſſed to the *Medes* and *Perſians*, as *Daniel* and the other prophets had foretold.

REFLECTIONS.

THE hiſtory recorded in this chapter is very remarkable; but what is chiefly to be obſerved is, I. That while king *Belſhazzar* was making a great feaſt for his nobles, giving himſelf up to mirth, and diſhonouring the true God, by drinking in the ſacred veſſels of the temple of *Jeruſalem* to the honour of idols, God cauſed a hand to appear writing his condemnation; that this prodigy, and *Daniel*'s explanation of it, might convince that idolatrous people, that the ſame God, whoſe temple *Nebuchadnezzar*, the grandfather of *Belſhazzar*, had deſtroyed, was going to overthrow the empire of the *Chaldeans*. II. The very great confuſion and uneaſineſs of *Belſhazzar* at the ſight of the hand, ſhews, that nothing is more weak and timorous than a guilty conſcience; and that the divine judgments overtake the ungodly, when they think themſelves moſt ſecure. III. Obſerve that *Daniel* reproached the king for not making a better uſe of the judgments with which God had chaſtiſed his grandfather *Nebuchadnezzar;* for perſiſting in his pride, and ſetting himſelf againſt God, by profaning the veſſels of the temple of *Jeruſalem*, and praiſing his idols, inſtead of giving glory to God. This is a viſible proof of the divine vengeance on thoſe whoſe heart is lifted up with proſperity; on the profane and ungodly, who inſtead of reverencing him from whom they receive life and breath, and all things, have the inſolence to exalt themſelves againſt him; and on thoſe who do not improve the warnings he gives them, the afflictions he viſits them with, nor the examples he ſets before their eyes. Laſtly, The death of *Belſhazzar*, and the ruin of the *Babyloniſh* empire, which then paſſed to the *Medes* and *Perſians*, is an event the more remarkable, as it had been foretold, not only by *Daniel*, but by *Iſaiah*, *Jeremiah*, and the other prophets, who had expreſsly foretold that *Babylon* ſhou d be taken in the night, while the king and the princes were rejoicing; which is alſo confirmed by the writers

writers of profane hiſtory. This hiſtory, therefore, ſhould be looked upon as a proof of the divine authority of the ſacred writings, and of the truth of religion; and ſhould lead us to adore the infinite power and wiſdom of God, and the wonders of his providence, which with ſo much wiſdom, juſtice, and goodneſs, directs all events.

CHAP. VI.

I. *DANIEL* is raiſed by king *Darius* to great honour, at which the great men of the kingdom being jealous, obtain an edict to forbid that any prayers ſhould be made, for the ſpace of thirty days, to any god or man whatever, except to the king. II. but *Daniel* continuing as uſual to pray to God publicly, was accuſed of violating the king's decree, and was caſt into the den of lions, where God miraculouſly preſerved him. III. The king, aſtoniſhed at the miracle, commands that the God of *Daniel* ſhould be worſhipped by all men.

REFLECTIONS.

THERE are ſeveral very important reflections to be made upon this chapter: I. The fidelity with which *Daniel* ſerved king *Darius*, is an example for thoſe in public poſts to diſcharge their duty with integrity. II. In the decree that *Darius* publiſhed, upon the importunity of *Daniel*'s enemies, we obſerve, on one hand, the folly and impiety of a prince who deſired to be worſhipped as a god; and, on the other, the evils that ariſe from envy and jealouſy, and how dangerous it is to liſten to thoſe who make uſe of craft, ſlander, and violence, to deſtroy the innocent. III. We here ſee the zeal of *Daniel*, who had been religious and devout in the greateſt proſperity, and ſo continues, when he is in the greateſt danger on that very account. He is no way intimidated by the king's edict; continues to worſhip his God, and that publicly, without fearing the danger to which he was expoſed; leſt, if

he had done it in ſecret, he might be thought to diſſemble his faith, and obey the king's command. On ſuch occaſions we muſt make public profeſſion of our faith, without the leaſt diſſimulation, and without betraying our conſciences for fear of men. IV. It is to be obſerved, that *Darius* was weak enough to conſent to *Daniel*'s death, though he thought him innocent. God did not think fit to deliver his ſervant by means of king *Darius*; but ſuffered *Daniel* to be caſt into the den of lions, becauſe he deſigned to ſend his angel to deliver him in a more glorious manner. The Scripture ſays, that *Daniel* was thus preſerved, *becauſe innocency was found in him, and he believed in his God.* This was a glorious reward of his fidelity, and a ſurpriſing effect of his faith, as St. *Paul* obſerves in his Epiſtle to the *Hebrews*. Thus God protects his ſervants; if they ſeem ſometimes to be forſaken, and paſt recovery, he at laſt happily delivers them out of all their trials. V. Another reflection to be made, is, that the lions had no power over *Daniel*; but his enemies were devoured by them immediately. This makes the divine protection of *Daniel* the more viſible; and thus God brings upon ſinners the evil they deſigned for others. Laſtly, The ſolemn acknowledgment that king *Darius* made of the majeſty of the true God, engages us to adore the goodneſs, juſtice, and almighty power of the Lord in all things, to publiſh his marvellous works, and to admire the ways of his providence, who made uſe of this king's edict, and of *Nebuchadnezzar*, and ſeveral other heathen princes, to make himſelf known among thoſe idolatrous nations. Chriſtian princes ought ſeriouſly to attend to theſe things, if they would not have theſe idolatrous princes riſe up in judgment againſt them.

CHAP. VII.

THIS chapter contains the viſion which the prophet *Daniel* had of the four beaſts, and the explanation which an angel gave him of that viſion; telling him,

him, there would be four great empires; and that in the time of the fourth, the kingdom of God ſhould be eſtabliſhed.

REFLECTIONS.

WE ought to meditate upon this prophecy with great attention. This myſterious dream which God ſent to *Daniel*, and the angels explanation of it, denote the very ſame thing as the viſion of the great image mentioned in the ſecond chapter of this Book; namely, that four great empires ſhould ſucceed each other; the firſt, the empire of the *Babylonians*; the ſecond, that of the *Medes* and *Perſians*; the third, the *Grecian* empire; and the fourth, as was obſerved on the ſecond chapter, either that of the kings of *Syria* and *Egypt*, called the *Seleucides* and the *Legides*, or that of the *Romans*. According to the firſt interpretation, that horn, that is, that power which would make war againſt the ſaints, but was to be deſtroyed, is king *Antiochus*, who ſo cruelly treated the *Jews*, and reduced them to the utmoſt extremities. If we follow the ſecond interpretation, that power means Antichriſt, who was to appear in the church, but whom God would deſtroy; after which the kingdom of God would be fully manifeſted. Theſe prophecies which extend to ſo many ages, and foretold ſo long beforehand theſe great revolutions, ſhew, that *Daniel* ſpake by divine inſpiration; that things to come are perfectly known to God, and that he rules over all things. We ought principally to acknowledge, that among all theſe revolutions, God had in view the eſtabliſhing his kingdom among men; and that the famous prophecy, which foretels that the Son of Man ſhould receive of God a kingdom and dominion over all things, and that his kingdom ſhould have no end, and that the ſaints ſhould reign with him, undoubtedly relate to our Lord *Jeſus Chriſt*; and that he has ſecured eternal glory and perfect happineſs for all his ſaints and faithful ſervants.

CHAP.

CHAP. VIII.

THIS chapter has two parts. The firſt is, The viſion that *Daniel* ſaw of the ram and of the goat, fighting with one another. The ſecond is the interpretation of that viſion by the angel *Gabriel*; the ſubſtance of which is, that a king of *Javan*, that is, of *Greece*, ſhould overthrow the monarchy of the *Medes* and *Perſians*; as it happened when *Alexander* the Great conquered *Darius*, the king of *Perſia*. Then the angel declares, that after the death of *Alexander*, there ſhould ariſe four horns, which ſignified that his empire ſhould be divided into four chief kingdoms; and that out of one of them there ſhould ariſe a king, proud and cruel, who would grievouſly perſecute the *Jews*, and cauſe the ſervice of God to ceaſe for the ſpace of three years and a half; but that he ſhould at laſt be deſtroyed. This was *Antiochus Epiphanes*, king of *Syria*.

REFLECTIONS.

THE prophecy contained in this chapter has been fully accompliſhed, and by the event is made ſo clear, that there remains not the leaſt obſcurity in it. The empire of the *Medes* and *Perſians* was raiſed to a great height, but was deſtroyed by *Alexander* the Great, who conquered *Darius*, king of *Perſia*. The monarchy of *Alexander* was after his death divided into four principal kingdoms; and from one of them, which was that of *Syria*, roſe up *Antiochus*, ſirnamed the Illuſtrious, who cruelly perſecuted the *Jews*, and made divine ſervice to ceaſe for three years and a half; after which the *Jews* were delivered from that perſecution, the temple was purified, and *Antiochus* felt the effects of the divine vengance. From this it indiſputably follows, that *Daniel*, who told ſo long beforehand all theſe events, was divinely inſpired. To this general reflection, which ſo evidently proves the truth of religion, we muſt add one particular conſideration; which

which is, that God was pleaſed to reveal all theſe things to *Daniel*, and make known to him what great miſeries *Antiochus* would bring upon the *Jews*, but that they ſhould be delivered from the tyranny of that prince. It was neceſſary the *Jews* ſhould be warned of this, that when this perſecution came upon them, they might with conſtancy bear up under it. This engages us to conſider, that God, whoſe providence governs all things, over-rules in a particular manner the events which concern the church; he ſometimes permits it to be oppreſſed for a while, but never quite forſakes it, and always ſets bounds to the malice of perſecutors. Laſtly, We ought to pray, that as the ſanctuary was formerly cleanſed from the abominations introduced by *Antiochus*, God would alſo purify his church, and purge Chriſtianity from the many pollutions which prevail it.

CHAP. IX.

THIS chapter contains two things: I. An excellent prayer, in which *Daniel* confeſſes the ſins of the *Jews*, and implores the mercy of God upon them. II. A moſt remarkable prophecy, ſhewing, that from the reſtoration of *Jeruſalem*, to the coming of the Meſſiah, there would be ſeventy weeks of years, that is four hundred and ninety years. We ſee likewiſe in this prophecy, that the Meſſiah was to die; that the *Romans* would take and deſtroy *Jeruſalem*, and cauſe a general deſolation throughout all the country of the *Jews*.

REFLECTIONS.

DANIEL's prayer is an excellent pattern of that humility with which we ſhould acknowledge and confeſs our ſins before God, eſpecially in calamitous times. We learn in this prayer, that the ſins of men kindle the wrath of God againſt them; and that the way to appeaſe it, is to betake ourſelves to the mercy of God, with a ſincere repentance and reformation of our

our lives. *Daniel*'s prayer for the reſtoration of *Jeruſalem* and the temple, ſhews, that it is the duty of all the ſincere members of the church to be concerned for it, and to offer up continual and devout prayers for its proſperity. The prophecy of the ſeventy weeks, is one of the moſt expreſs prophecies in all the Old Teſtament: it clearly determines the time that was to paſs between the decree for rebuilding *Jeruſalem*, and the death of the Meſſiah. The angel who ſpake to *Daniel* ſays, the time was to be four hundred and ninety years, to be reckoned from the decree made in favour of the *Jews* by *Artaxerxes*, ſirnamed *Longimanus*. This prophecy expreſsly declares, that at the end of this term the Meſſiah ſhould come; that he would make an atonement for ſin by his death; that he would eſtabliſh and confirm the covenant of God with men; and that afterwards the *Romans* ſhould come and deſtroy the city and temple of *Jeruſalem*. All theſe things have been exactly fulfilled at the time and in the manner foretold, as we are moſt certainly informed by hiſtory. Thus we have in this prophecy an immoveable ſupport of our faith, as it proves beyond contradiction the divine authority of the Holy Scriptures, and the truth of the Chriſtian Religion; ſhewing, in the cleareſt manner, that *Jeſus* is the promiſed Meſſiah, who has redeemed us by his death, and ſtrongly engaging us to believe in him as our Saviour, and to ſubmit to the doctrines which he preached.

CHAP. X.

THIS chapter, and the two following, contain a revelation made to *Daniel;* the deſign of which was to inform him what was to befal the *Jews*, from the reign of *Cyprus*, king of *Perſia*, to the end of the perſecution. In this chapter *Daniel* relates a viſion of an angel that appeared to him in the ſhape of a man cloathed in linen; the fright which the viſion cauſed; and how the angel comforted him, and prepared him to hear the things he had to tell him.

REFLEC-

REFLECTIONS.

OF what the angel ſaid to *Daniel* in this chapter this is the ſum; that the prayers of that prophet in behalf of the *Jews* had been heard; but that the kings of *Perſia* would oppoſe them; that the *Jews* would be croſſed in their deſign of building the temple; that, nevertheleſs, God would protect them; that the prince of *Javan*, or of the *Greeks*, that is, *Alexander* the Great, would come againſt the *Perſians*; and that the principal angels, ſuch as he who talked with *Daniel*, and *Michael* the archangel, would be employed by God to defend and aſſiſt the *Jews*, and to ſtrengthen the kings who were for the *Jews*, as, at the beginning of the following chapter, the angel who here ſpeaks is ſaid to have ſtrengthened king *Darius*. I. The affliction and faſting of *Daniel*, who mourned for three weeks, ſhould be conſidered as the effect of his zeal for the reſtoration of the *Jews*; it being the character of pious and zealous perſons to afflict themſelves when the glory of God is obſtructed, and to offer up prayers for the peace and proſperity of the church. II. We here ſee how much God loves thoſe who fear him, and ſerve him faithfully; and how great regard he has to their prayers and to their grief. This evidently appears, from the viſion of the angel who was ſent to *Daniel*, and the kind manner in which he ſpake to him; aſſuring him that he was acceptable to God, and that his prayers had been heard. III. What the angel ſaid to *Daniel*, that he had laboured and fought for the *Jews*, againſt thoſe who fought their ruin, is a proof of God's care of his church, and that he protects it in the worſt of times, and finds means to deliver it. This ſhews too, that God makes uſe of the miniſtry of angels, to execute his deſigns, and for the good of thoſe he is pleaſed to bleſs. But what ought to fill us with the greateſt confidence is, that *Jeſus Chriſt*, the head and king of the church, watches over it continually, and diſplays his power in its behalf.

CHAP. XI.

THE angel goes on ſpeaking to *Daniel*, and revealing to him things to come. This prophecy has three parts. I. It points out the end of the *Perſian* empire, and the eſtabliſhment of the *Grecian* monarchy by *Alexander* the Great. II. The dividing of that monarchy after his death, and the wars that were to be between the kings of *Egypt* and the kings of *Syria*. III. The reign of *Antiochus*, king of *Syria*, his wars with the king of *Egypt*, and particularly his perſecution of the *Jews*, his attempt to aboliſh the divine worſhip, and ſet up idolatry; and, laſtly, the deſtruction of that impious and cruel prince.

REFLECTIONS.

THE ſenſe and ſubſtance of this chapter is this: That there would be three kings in *Perſia* after *Cyrus* who then reigned; that after theſe would ariſe a powerful prince, namely *Xerxes;* that *Alexander* the Great would come and deſtroy the *Perſian* empire; that after his death his kingdom ſhould be divided, and out of it two principal ones be formed; namely, the kingdom of *Syria*, called in this chapter the kingdom of the north; and that of *Egypt*, called the kingdom of the ſouth: that theſe two kingdoms ſhould make war upon each other; that among the kings of *Syria* there ſhould be one who would uſurp the kingdom by artifice, which was *Antiochus Epiphanes;* that this king would be ſeveral times at war with the king of *Egypt*, would perſecute the *Jews*, put great numbers of them to death, and profane the temple of *Jeruſalem;* but that the *Jews* would reſiſt him, and recover their liberty; that this *Antiochus* would plunder the temples, would make another expedition into *Egypt;* and that after this God would bring him to his end. Though this chapter is attended with obſcurity to thoſe who are unacquainted with ancient hiſtory, yet ought not the reading of it to be neglected, ſince it is one of the

the cleareſt and moſt circumſtantial prophecies in the Old Teſtament. It compriſes the hiſtory of about four hundred years, and in the hiſtorians of thoſe times we meet with an exact account of the events here predicted. This chapter is therefore very remarkable; furniſhing us with the moſt evident and convincing proofs imaginable of the divine authority of the ſcriptures, and preſenting us with ſeveral particular reflections on the revolutions and wars that happen in the world, on the deſigns of Providence in theſe various events, on the perſecutions to which the church is expoſed, the deliverance vouchſafed by God, and the tragical end which is uſually the fate of tyrannical and perſecuting princes.

CHAP. XII.

THIS chapter is a ſequel of the prophecy contained in the foregoing. The angel who ſpake to *Daniel* here deſcribes two things: I. The deliverance that God would grant to his people, and the glorious reward he would beſtow upon thoſe that had been perſecuted by *Antiochus*. II. The continuance of that perſecution, which was to be three years and an half.

REFLECTIONS.

WE are to obſerve from this chapter, I. That God has always been the defender of his church, and that he has protected it, when it was aſſaulted with the greateſt violence. Of this we have a proof in what is here ſaid, that *Michael*, the archangel, ſhould take the part of the *Jews;* and in the glorious deliverance God vouchſafed them, after they had been cruelly perſecuted by *Antiochus*. II. Theſe words deſerve our ſerious attention; *Many of them that ſleep in the duſt of the earth ſhall awake, ſome to everlaſting life, and ſome to ſhame and everlaſting contempt.* As this promiſe related to the zealous *Jews*, who ſhould defend the cauſe of religion, and ſuffer death under the perſecution of *Antiochus;* ſo we cannot doubt but theſe words relate like-

likewiſe to the reſurrection of the dead, and to the difference that ſhall be made in the life to come between the righteous and the wicked. This is the doctrine which *Jeſus Chriſt* has taught us more clearly in the Goſpel, and in terms not unlike thoſe of *Daniel*. III. When the angel ſays, that the wiſe *Jews*, who ſhould ſignalize their fidelity in time of perſecution, ſhould be crowned with extraordinary glory; this, which deſerves to be well conſidered, ſhould inſpire us with great zeal in promoting the glory of God, even at the hazard of our lives, and in contributing all that is in our power to the edification and ſalvation of others. Laſtly, When we conſider, that the time of the perſecution of *Antiochus*, and the number of the days it was to laſt, are here ſo expreſsly deſcribed, we may infer from hence, that God keeps times in his own power; that he has ſet bounds which wicked men and the enemies of his glory ſhall not paſs; and that what he has reſolved, ſhall always come to paſs at the time, and in the manner that he has decreed. Theſe are, for the church in general, and for every particular believer, powerful motives to truſt in God, even in times of moſt ſevere trial; to rely on his Providence, and to wait with patience in the diſcharging of their duty till his decrees be accompliſhed.

The end of the Book of the Prophet DANIEL.

THE

THE

BOOK

OF THE PROPHET

HOSEA.

ARGUMENT.

Hoſea, *the firſt of the twelve minor prophets, was ſent to foretel the ruin of the kingdom of the ten tribes, as well as of the kingdom of* Judah. *He alſo foretold the return of the* Jews, *and the calling of the Gentiles; and propheſied about fourſcore years.*

CHAP. I, II, III.

IN the three firſt chapters, *Hoſea* repreſents, under the emblem of a marriage with a whoriſh woman, and of children born of her, that the *Iſraelites* were fallen into idolatry; that God, to puniſh them, would caſt them off, and reduce them to the utmoſt miſery; that, nevertheleſs, he would have pity on them, and receive them again into covenant.

REFLECTIONS *on chapters* i, ii, iii.

WE may in general obſerve on this prophecy, the great goodneſs of God, who ſent *Hoſea* and other prophets to the people of the ten tribes to recover them from the idolatry which was eſtabliſhed in their kingdom,

dom, and to exhort them to repentance. What we read at the beginning of this book looks like a real hiſtory, and gives ſome room to imagine, that *Hoſea* actually married a woman who had led a diſorderly life, but did not perſiſt in it; and it may be ſaid, that marrying her by God's command, he acted lawfully in ſo doing. However, as ſuch a marriage ſeems not conſiſtent with decency, eſpecially in a prophet, we may conſider it as a parable and allegory. The prophets often relate things which paſſed only in a viſion, or in a figure, as if they had really happened; which we have ſeveral expreſs inſtances of in their writings: and the name of the woman which *Hoſea* is ſaid to marry, and the other circumſtances mentioned, do not prove it to be a real hiſtory; any more than we may conclude, that the parable of the wicked rich man is not a parable, becauſe the name of *Lazarus* is mentioned in it, and the rich man is ſaid to have had five brethren. By what *Hoſea* here relates, God deſigned to ſhew, that the *Iſraelites* had forſaken his ſervice to worſhip idols, as the adulterous woman forſakes her huſband. The name of *Jezreel*, which is given to the firſt ſon that was born, ſignified, that God would puniſh the family of *Jehu*, king of *Iſrael*, for the idolatry and other ſins of that prince and his ſucceſſors. This threatening was executed, *Zechariah*, the ſon of *Jeroboam* the ſecond, in whoſe reign *Hoſea* propheſied, being the laſt king of the deſcendants of *Jehu*. The ſecond child was a daughter, named *Loruhamah;* which name ſignified, that God would no longer have compaſſion on the *Iſraelites*, but that they ſhould feel the effects of his vengeance; which alſo came to paſs. The name of the third was *Loammi*, which meant, that the *Iſraelites* were no more the people of God. After this, *Hoſea* foretels the calamities that were going to fall upon the *Jews*, for the puniſhment of their idolatry. However, God declares, that he ſtill entertained ſentiments of love for that people; and that after he had puniſhed them, he would have pity on them, and they ſhould be converted.

This

This is the meaning and deſign of theſe chapters; wherein we have a lively repreſentation of the infidelity of thoſe who break their covenant with God, and of the divine vengeance on them; as well as of his mercy on thoſe who with true repentance turn unto him.

CHAP. IV.

I. *HOSEA* declares that God, provoked by the many abominations which prevailed in the kingdom of *Iſrael*, even among the prieſts, and particularly by idolatry, which is here called adultery, would ſhortly deſtroy that kingdom. II. He exhorts the men of *Judah* not to imitate the ten tribes in their idolatry, and in the impieties committed at *Gilgal* and *Bethel*.

REFLECTIONS.

IT appears from this chapter, that in the time of *Hoſea* the kingdom of *Iſrael* was filled with impiety, injuſtice, diſſoluteneſs, and all manner of wickedneſs; that even the prieſts themſelves were extremely corrupted; and that this general depravity would ſoon expoſe the *Iſraelites*, as it happened when they were deſtroyed by the king of *Aſſyria*, and carried into his land. Theſe reproofs and theſe threatenings teach us, that when there is no fear of God in any country, when ſins multiply therein, and are committed without reſtraint, and men cannot be reduced to a ſenſe of their duty, God withdraws his protection from them, and viſits them with his judgments. The exhortations which *Hoſea* addreſſed to the *Jews* of *Judah*, to avoid falling into the ſins and idolatry of the men of *Iſrael*, ſhew us, that thoſe whom God has particularly honoured with the knowledge of himſelf, ought not to imitate the wicked in their diſorders; but on the contrary, keep inviolably to their duty, if they deſire to eſcape his moſt ſevere judgments.

CHAP.

CHAP. V.

I. *HOSEA* reproves the prieſts, the magiſtrates, and the princes of *Iſrael*, for being the occaſion of the ſins of the people, and of their ruin. II. He declares, that God would have no regard to the ſacrifices of the *Jews;* but would deſtroy them all, both thoſe of *Ephraim*, that is, of the kingdom of *Iſrael*, and thoſe of *Judah*; and that the aid of the king of *Aſſyria* would not ſecure them from the evils that were coming upon them.

REFLECTIONS.

WHAT is remarkable in this chapter is, I. That the corruption and ruin of the people proceed commonly from their ſpiritual and temporal guides, when they neglect to do their duty, and break the laws of religion and juſtice. II. That God does not accept the external ſervice that is paid him by hypocrites and ungodly men, who provoke him with their ſins. III. That it is in vain to have recourſe to men, when God is not on our ſide, and that there is no way to appeaſe him, when we have offended him, but by confeſſing our ſins and turning unto him by ſincere repentance.

CHAP. VI.

I. *HOSEA* exhorts the *Iſraelites* to be converted, and promiſes them, that if they did truly repent, God would have pity on them, and reſtore them. II. He reproaches the ten tribes for their inſincerity in their devotions; and tells them, that was the reaſon God threatened by his prophets to deſtroy them. III. He complains, that inſtead of becoming acceptable to God by their obedience, they broke his covenant, and gave themſelves up, both prieſts and people, to all manner of wickedneſs, and eſpecially to idolatry.

REFLEC-

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter teaches us, I. That when God threatens or puniſhes men, they cannot avert or appeaſe his wrath, without a ſpeedy and ſincere return to their duty. II. That piety and repentance, which ſoon paſſes away, and does not produce a ſteady reformation, is uſeleſs and unprofitable. III. That what God requires and delights in above all things is, that men ſhould know and fear him; that they ſhould exerciſe mercy and charity. This is expreſſed in theſe words of *Hoſea*, which our Saviour quotes in the Goſpel: *I deſired mercy, and not ſacrifice; and the knowledge of God, more than burnt-offerings.* The end of this chapter teaches us, that when thoſe, whom God has received into covenant, tranſgreſs, and fall into unbelief, God deprives them of his favour and protection, and makes them a public example: This the *Iſraelites* experienced, as *Hoſea* and the other prophets had threatened them.

CHAP. VII.

GOD complains here, I. That at the time he would have brought back *Ephraim*, that is to ſay, the *Iſraelites* of the ten tribes, from their idolatry and other ſins, they ſtill perſiſted in them. II. That their kings and princes were the firſt to draw the people into rebellion; and that for this reaſon they ſhould be conſumed by the fire of God's wrath, and become a prey to ſtrangers. III. God declares, that it would be in vain for them to ſeek aſſiſtance from the *Egyptians* or *Aſſyrians*. IV. He reproaches them for not being ſincere in their converſion when he had chaſtened them.

REFLECTIONS.

WE are to obſerve here, I. That as the *Iſraelites* did obſtinately perſiſt in their ſins, though God endea-

voured to reclaim them, ſo men often fly from God, and offend him more reſolutely, at the time when he ſeeks to call them to him. II. That the depravity of the people uſually proceeds from the bad example of thoſe that govern them, who infect them, and expoſe them to a total deſtruction. III. That it is in vain to have recourſe to human means, when God is not on our ſide; and that he even makes uſe of thoſe very means to puniſh thoſe who put their truſt in them; as the *Jews* found by experience, who expected to meet with aſſiſtance from the *Egyptians*, and were puniſhed by thoſe very people. Laſtly, The *Jews*, who cried and groaned under the preſſure of their afflictions, but did not turn to God, are like many among Chriſtians, who complain and grieve in time of adverſity, and ſeem to fly to God, but are not touched with true repentance, their ſorrow being nothing but a worldly ſorrow, and not producing a ſincere reformation.

CHAP. VIII.

I. THIS chapter contains more threatenings, denounced by God againſt the *Iſraelites* of the ten tribes, becauſe they had rebelled againſt him, by ſetting up other kings than thoſe of the houſe of *David;* and by ſubſtituting idolatry, and the worſhip of the golden calves, inſtead of the true ſervice of God; and by ſeeking aſſiſtance from the *Aſſyrians*. II. The prophet declares that the *Iſraelites*, for theſe and all their ſins, were near their deſtruction, and that after them the *Jews* of the kingdom of *Judah* ſhould likewiſe be rooted out.

REFLECTIONS.

THE chief reflection to be made upon *Hoſea*'s reproaches of the *Iſraelites* for their revolting from the obedience they owed to God, and forſaking his covenant and ſervice, is, that we cannot leave the worſhip that God requires of us, without expoſing ourſelves to his moſt ſevere vengeance. Upon which we are to obſerve,

obſerve, that it is not only by idolatry that men forſake God, but that they may do this by not paying him the true worſhip he requires of us, which is to ſerve him with a pure heart, to love him above all things, and to obey him. If therefore the *Iſraelites* were puniſhed ſo ſeverely for their idolatry, Chriſtians who rebel againſt God, and diſobey the laws of *Jeſus Chriſt*, have reaſon to expect puniſhments much more ſevere.

CHAP. IX.

THE ſubſtance of this chapter is, I. That the *Iſraelites*, becauſe they had forſaken God to ſerve idols, ſhould be driven out of their own land, and diſperſed in *Egypt* and *Aſſyria*; and that their ſacrifices were rejected. II. That their deſtruction, when it came upon them, would ſhew, that falſe prophets had deceived them. III. That they were as corrupt as the *Iſraelites* of *Gibeah* formerly were; and that the idolatries long committed in their land, particularly at *Gilgal*, would bring upon them and their children a deſolation which they would never recover from.

REFLECTIONS.

LET us ſeriouſly conſider what happened formerly to the *Iſraelites* for forſaking the true ſervice of God, embracing an idolatrous religion and falſe worſhip, and giving heed to falſe prophets rather than to the prophets of the Lord. This people, whom God had ſo much loved, and with whom he had made a covenant, were deprived of his protection, and the privileges they enjoyed, and diſperſed among ſtrange nations. Thus we ſee what ingratitude towards God, and unfaithfulneſs in his ſervice, expoſe men to: God at laſt rejects thoſe who will not hear his voice, and after he has ſpared them for a long while, viſits them for their wickedneſs, and executes the judgments he had denounced againſt them.

CHAP. X.

THE ſubſtance of this chapter is, that becauſe the *Iſraelites* had perſiſted in their idolatry, and their other ſins, and had even increaſed them more and more, they ſhould be carried away from their country; that *Samaria*, which was their capital city, ſhould be taken, with its king; and that God would bring againſt them a people who ſhould reduce them to the utmoſt deſolation. For the right underſtanding of this chapter it muſt be obſerved, that *Ephraim* ſignifies the *Iſraelites* of the ten tribes; that *Bethel*, or *Bethaven*, was the place where they worſhipped idols; that the *Calves*, or the young heifers, were the idols they worſhipped in that place; and that the *Chemarim* were the prieſts who ſacrificed to thoſe falſe Gods.

REFLECTIONS.

ON this, as well as the other chapters of this Book, it is to be remarked, that all thoſe miſeries which *Hoſea* and the other prophets had denounced againſt the *Iſraelites*, overtook them when *Salmaneſer* came and deſtroyed *Samaria*, and carried the ten tribes into *Aſſyria*. Their total ruin, therefore, is to be attributed to their idolatry and impenitence; ſince, inſtead of forſaking their ſins, they increaſed them more and more. In this example every one may ſee that God is juſt, and that he will not ſuffer the contempt of his covenant to go unpuniſhed. And, when we hear the prophets frequently reproaching the *Jews* for their idolatry, and denouncing the divine vengeance againſt them for it, we ſhould remember, that to break the commandments of God, and to turn our heart from him to beſtow it upon the world, is to be guilty of a kind of idolatry, which is not leſs odious to him in Chriſtians, than that which *Hoſea* complained of was in the *Jews*, and which he will not fail to puniſh, by excluding from his preſence and from his kingdom thoſe who become guilty of it.

CHAP.

CHAP. XI.

THE prophet repreſents to the *Jews* of the ten tribes, that notwithſtanding the kindneſs God had ſhewn to their fathers, in bringing them out of *Egypt*, and all that he had done to draw them to him, they had forſaken him, and were fallen into idolatry and all kind of ſins, which would cauſe God to deliver them to the king of *Aſſyria*. However, the Lord teſtifies, that he was moved with compaſſion towards them, becauſe they were his people, and therefore promiſed he would not deſtroy them utterly, but would bring them again from their diſperſion.

REFLECTIONS.

I. GOD reproaches the *Jews* for making ſo ill a return for his love to them and to their fathers, and for the mercies he had conferred on them; which is a warning to us, not to be ungrateful to the Lord for all his kindneſſes, and eſpecially for his ſpiritual favours, which are infinitely more valuable than thoſe he had beſtowed upon the *Jews*. II. *Hoſea* here teaches us, that God draws men, and endeavours to unite them to him with the cords of love; that is to ſay, by kind and gentle means, before he makes uſe of ſeverity againſt them. III. We ſee the great goodneſs of God towards the guilty *Jews* in his declaring, that he could not reſolve to deſtroy the *Iſraelites*; that he was moved with compaſſion towards them; that after he had chaſtened them, he would have pity on them. God is always merciful towards men, ſparing them when he puniſhes them, and returns with his favour and loving-kindneſs as ſoon as the affliction has humbled them, and brought them again to their duty.

CHAP. XII.

I. *HOSEA* complains, that the *Iſraelites* of the ten tribes had ſet up idolatrous worſhip, whilſt the worſhip

worſhip God had preſcribed was obſerved in the kingdom of *Judah*; and he threatens likewiſe the men of *Judah* for falling into idolatry, in imitation of the ten tribes. II. He reminds the *Iſraelites* of the bleſſings God had conferred on their father *Jacob*, and his poſterity, in bringing them out of *Egypt*, and leading them through the wilderneſs; but reproaches them for the ungrateful returns they had made for all the mercies they had received, and for provoking him by their worſhip of idols.

REFLECTIONS.

THE deſign of this chapter was to put the *Jews* in mind of their ingratitude and infidelity towards God, who had not ceaſed to ſhower his favours upon them, in order to bring them to a ſenſe of their duty. This ſhould remind us of the ineſtimable bleſſings God has vouchſafed us, in giving us the knowledge of himſelf, and redeeming us by his Son; and ſhould make us ſenſible how great our guilt muſt be, and how ſeverely our ingratitude will be puniſhed, if we make not a ſuitable return for ſo many benefits. Thoſe words of the prophet deſerve a ſerious attention, where he ſays, *Jacob had power over the angel and prevailed, when he wept, and made ſupplication unto him.* The example of this patriarch teaches us, that God will refuſe nothing to thoſe who call upon him with humility and perſeverance; and that the way to obtain the bleſſing of God, is to adhere to him by faith, and a ſincere deſire of his grace and bleſſing.

CHAP. XIII.

I. *HOSEA* ſays, that the people of *Ephraim*, that is, the *Jews* of the ten tribes, were formerly very powerful, and a terror to their enemies; but that, ſince their idolatry and diſobedience againſt God, who had brought them out of *Egypt*, and bleſſed them, they had expoſed themſelves to his wrath. II. He foretels, that their kingdom ſhould be deſtroyed, and that

that *Samaria*, their capital city, ſhould be laid waſte; whereas, had they continued faithful to their God, he would have ſecured them from all theſe misfortunes.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter engages us to reflect on what formerly befel the *Iſraelites*, for making ſo ill a return for the divine favour towards them, and abuſing his patience and mercies. God, who had been their protector, and the protector of their fathers, declared againſt them, and cauſed them to be deſtroyed by the *Aſſyrians*. Let us from hence learn to acknowledge, that men bring upon themſelves all the evil that befals them. The Lord is full of kindneſs, and has only merciful intentions towards them; but when they return his favours with ingratitude, and are inſenſible of his long-ſuffering, they loſe their ſhare in his love, and at laſt feel his ſevereſt vengeance.

CHAP. XIV.

I. THE prophet exhorts the people of *Iſrael* to fly to God by repentance, not to put their truſt in the *Aſſyrians*, and to renounce the worſhip of idols. II. He promiſes a return of the divine favour to thoſe who ſhould be converted.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS laſt chapter of *Hoſea* contains theſe two inſtructions: I. That when we have offended God, and fallen into rebellion, we muſt recover by a ſpeedy converſion, by having recourſe to his mercy, and making promiſes of amendment, and by ſerving him faithfully. II. That God is always diſpoſed to receive into favour thoſe that repent, and to do them good after he has chaſtiſed them. God's promiſes of pardon to the *Iſraelites*, ſhewed what would happen to thoſe among them who were recalled into their own country with the other *Jews* who returned from *Babylon*; that God would

would bleſs them, and they ſhould for ever renounce the worſhip of idols. The uſe we are to make of the example of that people, and of the warnings contained in this prophecy, is expreſſed in the laſt words of this Book: *Who is wiſe, and he ſhall underſtand theſe things? prudent, and he ſhall know them? For the ways of the Lord are right, and the juſt ſhall walk in them; but the tranſgreſſors ſhall fall therein.*

The end of the Book of the Prophet HOSEA.

THE

THE

BOOK

OF THE PROPHET

J O E L.

ARGUMENT.

Joël *propheſied in the kingdom of* Judah; *but we do not know exactly at what time. The occaſion of his prophecy is an extraordinary drought and famine which happened in that kingdom. He exhorts the* Jews *to humiliation and repentance; he likewiſe foretels their return from the* Babyloniſh *captivity; and what was to happen in the laſt days, when the Meſſiah ſhould come.*

CHAP. I.

JOEL here deſcribes the deſolation to which *Judea* was ſhortly to be reduced, by drought, by vermin, and by famine; and exhorts the people to humble themſelves before God, and to have recourſe to his mercy by prayer and repentance.

REFLECTIONS *after reading the chapter.*

THE famine with which the *Jews* were viſited in the time of *Joel,* ſhould be conſidered in theſe two lights; firſt, as a chaſtiſement from God on that people; and ſecondly, as a forerunner of the deſolation which the *Babylonians* would cauſe in *Judea*; whereupon

whereupon we may make two reflections. I. That God has ſeveral ways of chaſtiſing men: He ſometimes puniſhes guilty nations by drought, by vermin, by barrenneſs, and by famine, as it happened formerly to the kingdom of *Judah*. II. That when God ſends any of theſe ſcourges, we muſt betake ourſelves to him by faſting, humiliation, and earneſt prayer, and endeavour to prevail upon him by a ſincere repentance, leſt ſtill heavier judgments overtake us. By this means temporal calamities are ſometimes averted; but we are ſure thereby to obtain pardon of ſins, and deliverance from the miſeries of the ſoul, and the puniſhments of the life to come.

CHAP. II.

THIS chapter has three parts: I. *Joel* deſcribes, in a figurative manner, the calamities that were to fall upon the *Jews*, by famine, by vermin, and by the *Chaldeans*. II. He exhorts them all to humble themſelves, particularly the prieſts, and to turn away the anger of the Lord by a ſolemn faſt, and by prayer; which if they did, he aſſures them God would have compaſſion on them. III. He adds a very expreſs prophecy concerning the return from the captivity, and the gifts of the Holy Ghoſt, which *Jeſus Chriſt* was to beſtow upon men after his aſcenſion into heaven, and before the laſt deſtruction of *Jeruſalem*.

REFLECTIONS.

WE may learn from this chapter, as well as the former, I. That famine, war, and other calamities, are the effects of God's juſtice, and the methods he uſes for the puniſhment of men. II. When God appears provoked, we muſt endeavour to pacify his wrath by prayer and faſting; but that the true manner of humbling ourſelves by faſting, is, to have the heart broken with real ſorrow, and to be converted to God by a ſincere reformation. This is a general duty; but the prophet's particular addreſs to the prieſts, ſhews, that

that this is, in a peculiar manner, the duty of the miniſters of religion. III. We have here very poſitive promiſes, that God would redeem his people; that he would pour out his ſpirit upon all fleſh in the latter days; and that then all who ſhould call upon the name of the Lord ſhould be ſaved. This promiſe relates to the times of the Goſpel; and was fulfilled when our Lord ſent the Holy Ghoſt upon his apoſtles, after his aſcenſion into heaven; as St. *Peter* ſhews in the ſecond chapter of the *Acts*; and this promiſe is executed in behalf of all the faithful who live under the new covenant, ſince God pours his holy ſpirit into their hearts, and gives ſalvation to all ſuch as call upon his name; which ſhould lead us to celebrate the divine mercy towards us, and to make a due improvement of all the ſpiritual bleſſings which he ſo plentifully beſtows upon us in his church.

CHAP. III.

JOEL foretels, that God would bring the *Jews* again after their captivity into their own country; that he would take vengeance upon their enemies for their cruelty and injuſtice towards them, would deliver his people, and bleſs them abundantly.

REFLECTIONS.

THE promiſes contained in this chapter, whereby God had engaged to bring again the captive *Jews* into their own country, and to puniſh the idolatrous nations who had afflicted them, were fulfilled, when the *Jews* returned from their captivity at *Babylon*; and the *Edomites*, *Egyptians*, and *Babylonians*, who had ſo greatly afflicted the people of God, felt the divine vengeance. We here ſee, that God is faithful to his promiſes, and that his covenant with his people ſtandeth ſure; that when he appears moſt angry with them, he ſtill preſerves his love and kindneſs towards them. Laſtly, we here obſerve the care of God takes in preſerving, protecting, and defending his church, againſt the

the power and malice of its enemies. These promises are likewise applicable to the Christian church in a sense still more perfect; and it is in this light that we are to consider them, and to meditate upon them, for our edification and comfort.

The end of the Book of the Prophet JOEL.

THE

THE

BOOK

OF THE PROPHET

AMOS.

ARGUMENT.

God ſent the prophet Amos, *who was a ſhepherd, to exhort the* Jews *of* Iſrael *and* Judah *to repentance; to denounce his judgments againſt them; and at the ſame time to foretel the deliverance of the people of God, and the coming of* Jeſus Chriſt. *The time in which* Amos *propheſied, is noted at the beginning of his Book.*

CHAP. I.

GOD ſays, that he was going to puniſh the *Syrians, Philiſtines, Tyrians, Edomites, Moabites,* and *Ammonites,* becauſe of their crimes, and the evils they had done to the *Jews.*

REFLECTIONS *after reading the chapter.*

ON this chapter we are to conſider, that all the people here mentioned, felt the effects of the threatenings denounced againſt them by *Amos* and the other prophets; and that God puniſhed them, by means of the *Aſſyrians,* for their pride and injuſtice, and the cruelties they had exerciſed againſt the *Jews,* whereby

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we ſee, that God is juſt and true in his threatenings, and revenges the injuries done to the innocent, and eſpecially to his church.

CHAP. II.

I. *AMOS* denounces the ruin of the *Moabites*. II. He declares next, that the people of *Judah* and of *Iſrael* ſhould be likewiſe puniſhed, becauſe they had forſaken the ſervice and laws of the Lord, and rendered themſelves guilty of foul ingratitude; and becauſe, although God had raiſed prophets among them, to warn them, they had refuſed to hearken to them.

REFLECTIONS.

THE threatenings contained in this chapter engage us to conſider, that God, after he had declared that he would execute his judgments upon the nations round about the *Jews*, ſays, he would likewiſe puniſh the kingdoms of *Judah* and *Iſrael* for their ſins; becauſe they had ſinned againſt God, forſaken his ſervice, abuſed his favours, and refuſed to hearken to the prophets, whom he had at ſeveral times raiſed up among them. God puniſhes ſin every where, and particularly in thoſe on whom he has conferred extraordinary favours, when they make ungrateful returns for his mercies, break his laws, and caſt his word behind them, and deſpiſe the warnings of his ſervants.

CHAP. III.

I. *AMOS* denounces the dreadful judgments of God againſt the *Iſraelites*, and declares, that God was going to execute his threatenings upon them, according to the predictions of the prophet. II. He calls the *Philiſtines* and *Egyptians* to be witneſſes of the ſins of the *Iſraelites*, and of the vengeance God would take upon them: and he foretels, that the cities and palaces of the *Iſraelites* ſhould be overthrown, and that *Beth-el*, which was the place where they worſhipped the idols, ſhould be totally deſtroyed.

REFLEC-

REFLECTIONS.

I. GOD's ſevere treatment of the *Jews*, whom he had choſen above all the people of the earth, but they had rebelled againſt him, teaches us, that thoſe whom God has received into covenant, and has diſtinguiſhed by his favours, are moſt ſeverely puniſhed when they prove unfaithful. II. *Amos* teaches us, that when God ſpeaks and threatens, all the world ought to ſtand in awe; and that no evil happens to men but what proceeds from God. This ought to fill us with a ſalutary dread of the voice of God and his threatenings; and make us confeſs, that all the evils, and all the calamities which come upon men, are the diſpenſations of Providence; and that we ought to adore in all things the juſtice of God, and to ſubmit to his will. III. When we read, that God calls the neighbouring people to bear witneſs to the great diſorders that reigned among the *Jews*, and to ſee the vengeance that he was going to take upon them; this ſhews to what a height of corruption they were arrived, inſomuch that the idolatrous nations themſelves had reaſon to be aſtoniſhed, and to acknowledge the juſtice of God's judgments upon them. IV. The ſame juſtice appeared, in that *Beth-el*, which was the place where their idolatry was eſtabliſhed, and the palaces and houſes of the great men, in which they had committed their crimes were devoted to utter deſtruction.

CHAP. IV.

I. THE prophet foretels, that the Lord would quickly deſtroy *Samaria*, the capital of the ten tribes, becauſe of the wickedneſs, injuſtice, and violence, which the great men, who are here called the fat kine of *Baſan*, committed in it, and becauſe of the idolatry that was eſtabliſhed at *Beth-el*, and at *Gilgal*. II. He next reproaches the *Jews*, that notwithſtanding God had chaſtened them by famine, drought, vermin, peſtilence, and other ſcourges, yet they were not converted

verted to him; and therefore, that they muſt prepare themſelves to feel the utmoſt effects of his wrath and indignation.

REFLECTIONS.

THERE are two reflections to be made on this chapter. I. That there are two ſins which particularly provoke God to anger againſt a nation; which are, the injuſtice and oppreſſion committed by great men; and the profanation of divine ſervice, and the falſe worſhip paid to God. The other thing we are to learn here is, that God uſes to call men to converſion by divers corrections, before he ſuffers his ſevereſt judgments to fall upon them. He had ſent famine, drought, burnings, vermin, peſtilence, and war upon the *Iſraelites*, to bring them to himſelf; but becauſe they did not ſincerely turn to God when he ſmote them with all theſe ſcourges, he at laſt made uſe of the moſt dreadful and ſevere chaſtiſements, delivering them to their enemies, and driving them out of their own country.

CHAP. V.

I. *AMOS* foretels and declares the deſolation of the ten tribes, and attributes that deſolation to the idolatry, oppreſſion, injuſtice, and other crimes of that nation; but particularly, to their continuing in the idolatrous worſhip practiſed at *Beth-el*, *Gilgal*, *and Beerſheba*. II. He deſcribes the miſeries that were to fall upon their cities and the whole country. III. He tells them, that God abhorred their feaſts, their ſolemn aſſemblies, their burnt ſacrifices, and their whole worſhip; becauſe they ſerved idols, as their fathers had done in the wilderneſs; and that to puniſh them for their idolatry, they would ſoon be carried captives into *Aſſyria*, beyond *Damaſcus*.

REFLECTIONS.

GOD continues in this chapter to reprove the *Iſraelites* for their two principal ſins; namely, that they

were idolators, and that the great men among them had no ſenſe of religion and conſcience, but oppreſſed the innocent, committed injuſtice, and took rewards and bribes. Theſe reproaches, which ſo frequently occur in the Prophets, ſhew very plainly, that thoſe ſins are of the number of the great crimes that God ſuffers not to paſs unpuniſhed, and which even occaſion the ruin of kings and nations. II. It appears from hence, that God, at the time he ſo ſeverely threatened the *Iſraelites*, was ſo gracious as to inform them how they might prevent their deſtruction, by forbidding them to go to *Beth-el* and other places where they ſerved idols; telling them ſeveral times: *Seek the Lord, and ye ſhall live. Hate the evil, and love the good, and eſtabliſh judgment in the gate; it may be that the Lord God of hoſts will be gracious unto you.* God is infinitely good, and long-ſuffering towards ſinners, does not puniſh them as they deſerve, till he has ſhewed them the way to eſcape his judgments. III. We have ſeen, that the ſacrifices, and all the worſhip of the *Jews* were diſpleaſing to God; that he *hated their feaſt days and their ſolemn aſſemblies, and would not accept their burnt-offerings.* God thereby declares, that all outward acts of religious worſhip, even thoſe which are attended with the greateſt ſolemnity, are looked upon by him as ſacrilege and impiety, when thoſe who perform them trample under foot his holy laws, and have no real intention to pleaſe him, and to do his will.

CHAP. VI.

THE rebukes and threatenings in this chapter, are chiefly addreſſed to the rich and great men of the kingdom of *Judah* and *Iſrael*. I. *Amos* reproves them for their injuſtice, diſſoluteneſs, ſenſual lives, and pride; and he blames them, above all, that at a time when they ſhould afflict themſelves for the deſolation of *Joſeph*, that is to ſay, of a part of their brethren; and when they themſelves were threatened with the like

like treatment, they abandoned themſelves to mirth and pleaſure. III. He gives them to underſtand, that God, being juſtly provoked, would humble their pride, cauſe both great and ſmall to periſh in a miſerable manner, and take from them all thoſe advantages which they abuſed, and deliver them into the hands of the *Aſſyrians*.

REFLECTIONS.

WE are chiefly to obſerve, in the reading of this chapter, that among the ſeveral ſins which diſpleaſe God, and provoke his indignation, there are three which particularly produce this effect; which are, I. The injuſtice and violence committed by the rich and great. II. A ſenſual and voluptuous life, luxury, high living, the love of pleaſure and diverſions, and pride. III. Inſenſibility under God's corrections, and the examples of his wrath. Theſe were the ſins for which the *Jews* periſhed, and which bring down his vengeance upon ſuch as are guilty of them; wherefore we ought moſt carefully to avoid them. To this end let us conſider, that theſe ſins do not only expoſe men to temporal puniſhment, but make them ſubject ſtill more unavoidably to the puniſhments of the world to come; and that injuſtice, a love of pleaſures, impatience, and ſecurity, are yet more diſpleaſing to God in Chriſtians, than they were in the *Jews;* becauſe the Goſpel does ſo expreſsly command, and by the moſt powerful motives engage us, to renounce the deſires of the fleſh, and to live in charity, temperance, and humility.

CHAP. VII.

THIS chapter has two parts. In the firſt, *Amos* relates three viſions: the two firſt, which are the viſion of the graſhoppers, and that of the fire, repreſent the corrections wherewith God had intended to viſit the *Iſraelites*; and from which they had been delivered by the interceſſion of the prophet, and by

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the goodneſs and long-ſuffering of God towards them. The third viſion, which was that of a man with a plumb-line in his hand, denoted, that God was juſt going to put his threatenings in execution againſt that people; that he would not bear with them any longer, and in particular, would deſtroy the houſe of *Jeroboam*. In the ſecond part of this chapter, *Amos* relates that *Amaziah*, who was an idolatrous prieſt of *Beth-el*, accuſed him to *Jeroboam*, the king of *Iſrael*, of conſpiring againſt him; and would have forced the prophet to fly into the land of *Judah*, and to propheſy no more at *Beth-el*. But *Amos* repeated his predictions, and threatens *Amaziah* and his family with a fatal end, and ſays, that the *Iſraelites* ſhould certainly be carried out of their country.

REFLECTIONS.

THE viſions related in the firſt part of this chapter ſhew, that before God caſt off the *Jews*, he had chaſtened them ſeveral ways, and bore with them a long time, being moved by the interceſſion of the prophet; but ſeeing that their hardneſs of heart was unconquerable, he was reſolved to ſpare them no longer. God in his goodneſs and patience does not preſently deſtroy thoſe who ſin againſt him; he hearkens unto the interceſſion of good men, and warns and corrects them; but when ſinners deſpiſe God's long-ſuffering, he diſplays on them the utmoſt ſeverity of his juſtice, from which nothing can ſecure them. In the ſecond part we ſee, how an idolatrious prieſt accuſed *Amos* of having conſpired againſt the king, and would have had him leave the land of *Iſrael*; but the prophet continued always ſpeaking in God's name, and declared to that ungodly prieſt, that he ſhould ſee the ſhame and deſtruction of his family, and ſhould be carried with the *Iſraelites* into a ſtrange land. This is an example to ſhew that the innocent, and the true ſervants of God, have in all ages been expoſed to calumny, and the contradiction of ſinners; that the

fear of men ought not to diſcourage them, nor hinder them from diſcharging their duty; and that thoſe who reſiſt the word of God, and his faithful miniſters, as they oppoſe God himſelf, ſhall never eſcape unpuniſhed.

CHAP. VIII.

I. THE Lord repreſents the ruin of the kingdom of *Iſrael*, by the viſion of a baſket of ſummer fruits, which were ripe and fit to eat. II. He blames thoſe that enrich themſelves by covetouſneſs, extortion, injuſtice, and by oppreſſing the people. Laſtly, He declares, that God would not ſuffer theſe crimes to paſs unpuniſhed; that he would overwhelm the land of *Iſrael* with all kind of calamities; and chiefly, that he would ſend the famine of his word to puniſh the *Iſraelites* for their contempt of it, and for the idolatry they committed in worſhipping the golden calves of *Dan* and *Beerſheba*.

REFLECTIONS.

BESIDES the general reflections we may make upon the puniſhments the *Iſraelites* drew upon themſelves by their idolatry, and by their other ſins, this chapter offers us two particular conſiderations, which we ought carefully to attend to. One is, that it is a very great and crying ſin to make uſe of fraud, extortion, and oppreſſion, to gain wealth; to have falſe weights and falſe meaſures; and eſpecially to ſhut up and engroſs corn, and other things neceſſary for life, in the time of famine, with a deſign to enrich ourſelves, and by that means get the ſubſtance of the poor and neceſſitous. It is very remarkable, that God ſwears by himſelf that he will not ſuffer ſuch ſins to go unpuniſhed. The other conſideration relates to the threatening of the prophet, that God would *ſend a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirſt for water, but of hearing the word of the Lord.* Let us learn from hence, that the moſt terrible chaſtiſement

tiſement God can inflict upon a people is to deprive them of his word, and no longer to ſend his faithful ſervants amongſt them; and therefore, that thoſe who enjoy thoſe precious advantages ought to eſteem them above all things, and make a good uſe of them, leſt God deprive them of them.

CHAP. IX.

I. *AMOS* relates a new viſion, in which he ſaw God ſtanding upon the altar, and commanding that place to be deſtroyed, with all the people; and declaring, that his vengeance would purſue the *Jews* wherever they went; and that he would no longer look upon them as his people. II. He promiſes, nevertheleſs, that after he had diſperſed them, he would recall them one day, and would reſtore the tabernacle, that is to ſay, the throne of *David*, and the true worſhip of God; and with this promiſe *Amos* ends his prophecy.

REFLECTIONS.

IN this chapter we ſee God's ſevere juſtice againſt the *Jews*, and his mercy towards the remnant of that nation. The ſeverity of God's juſtice appears in the order he gave an angel to deſtroy the *Jews*; and eſpecially in his declaring, that though they ſhould hide themſelves in the bottom of the earth or ſea, or ſhould aſcend up even to the heavens, his vengeance ſhould purſue them thither, ſince he is the great and mighty God, the creator and governor of the world. Theſe words, ſo full of majeſty, ſhould inſpire us with fear and reverence, and convince us that God is every where, that his power has no bounds, and that nothing can ſcreen the wicked from his juſtice and vengeance. The mercy of God ſhews itſelf in his declaring, that the *Jews* ſhould not be caſt off for ever; that he would have compaſſion on them, and bring them again from their captivity; that he would raiſe up the tabernacle of *David*; and that then all the nations

tions ſhould call upon the name of the Lord. This prophecy does not only ſignify that the *Jews* ſhould return into their own land after the captivity; it relates alſo to the glorious eſtabliſhment of the kingdom of the Meſſiah, and the calling of the Gentiles, as St. *James* explains it in the fifteenth chapter of the *Acts*, where he quotes theſe words, *After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down. And I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will ſet it up. That the reſidue of men might ſeek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, ſaith the Lord, who doth all theſe things.*

The end of the Book of the Prophet AMOS.

THE

THE

BOOK

OF THE PROPHET

OBADIAH.

ARGUMENT.

The Book of Obadiah *is a prophecy againſt the* Edomites, *who were neighbours of the* Jews, *and deſcended from* Eſau, Jacob's *brother; for which reaſon the prophet ſays, that the* Jews *were their brethren.* Obadiah *foretels, that God would root out the* Edomites *becauſe of their pride, and particularly, becauſe they rejoiced at the ruin of the* Jews, *and had even helped to deſtroy them; which might incline us to believe, that he lived after the deſtruction of* Jeruſalem: *But as* Joel, *chap.* iii. 19, *and* Amos, *chap.* i. 11, 12, *reprove and threaten the* Edomites *in the ſame manner, and the prophecy of* Obadiah *is placed immediately after that of* Joel *and* Amos, *we muſt ſuppoſe theſe three prophets lived at the ſame time; and that what is ſaid in this Book of the miſeries that had befallen the* Jews, *relates to ſome other calamities which they had been expoſed to; as we read* 2 Chron. xxi. 16, 17, *and* xxv. 21. Obadiah *foretels likewiſe, that the* Jews *ſhould return into their own land, and even poſſeſs part of the country of the* Edomites.

REFLEC-

REFLECTIONS *after reading the chapter.*

THE prophecy of *Obadiah* has this peculiarity in it, that he propheſied not againſt the *Jews*, but againſt another nation, even againſt the *Edomites*. Two things are to be conſidered in this Book. The firſt is, that the ruin of the *Edomites* happened as *Obadiah* and the other prophets had foretold; for the *Chaldeans* took and deſtroyed *Edom* ſoon after *Jeruſalem* was taken; and when the *Jews* were returned into their own land, they gained great advantages over the *Edomites*, and became maſters of a part of their country. Theſe events, which ſo exactly anſwer the predictions of *Obadiah*, prove the divine authority of his prophecy. The ſecond reflection relates to the cauſe of their deſtruction. The prophet ſeveral times declares, that they were thus treated on account of their pride, their vain confidence, and particularly becauſe they had rejoiced to ſee the miſeries of the *Jews*, their neighbours and brethren: and had even helped to deſtroy them; killing thoſe who had eſcaped the rage of the *Babylonians*, when *Jeruſalem* was taken. Thus Providence brings down proud and cruel people, ſeverely puniſhes thoſe who inſult the miſerable and delight in their ſufferings, and takes vengeance on the enemies of the church, and thoſe who oppoſe his glory.

The end of the Book of the Prophet OBADIAH.

THE

THE

BOOK

OF THE PROPHET

JONAH.

ARGUMENT.

Jonah *lived in the time of* Jereboam *the Second, king of* Iſrael. *He was ſent from God to* Nineveh, *the capital of the empire of the* Aſſyrians, *to denounce the ruin of that city: And this Book informs us what was the ſucceſs of his miniſtry.* Jonah *uttered other prophecies beſides that contained in this Book; as may be concluded from the fourteenth chapter of the Second Book of* Kings. Jonah *is the only prophet, whoſe writings are handed down to us, that was ſent to any ſtrange nation. What our Lord ſays in the Goſpel, confirms the truth of what is contained in this Book, and ſhews, that* Jonah *was a prophet ſent from God.*

CHAP. I

I. GOD ſends *Jonah* to *Nineveh*; but the prophet being afraid to go thither, embarks to go to *Tarſhiſh.* II. God raiſes a great tempeſt, and *Jonah* is caſt into the ſea to allay the ſtorm.

REFLEC-

REFLECTIONS *after reading the chapter.*

IT may be obſerved in general upon the Book of *Jonah*, that God ſent that prophet to the *Ninevites*, and to the *Aſſyrians*, that thoſe idolators and enemies of the *Jews*, who were in a ſhort time to deſtroy the kingdom of the ten tribes, might know that the God of *Iſrael* was the Almighty God, who would overthrow their city, as it happened ſome time after. The particular reflections to be made on this chapter are three: I. That *Jonah*, fearing to go to diſcharge his commiſſion at *Nineveh*, attempted to fly into a diſtant country. This was the effect of the prophet's weakneſs, which, upon this occaſion, got the better of his piety. They who have not courage to obey the divine call, are guilty of a ſin like that of *Jonah*; but this the miniſters of God are particularly guilty of, who, through ſhame or the fear of men, dare not ſpeak to them in his name. II. The ſtorm which ſuddenly came upon *Jonah*, and thoſe that ſailed with him, and which God ſent, teaches us, that it is in vain to think of eſcaping his knowledge, or flying from his authority; ſince he purſues and finds out thoſe that refuſe to obey him, who, wherever they are, cannot eſcape his juſtice. III. We muſt obſerve, that *Jonah* was diſcovered by lot, caſt into the ſea, and ſwallowed by a fiſh. By this means God was pleaſed to puniſh the prophet for his diſobedience, make him ſenſible of the greatneſs of his crime, and engaged him to confeſs it before thoſe who were with him in the ſhip, and to repair it afterwards by going to *Nineveh*. Thus God propoſed to inſpire thoſe idolators with fear that were with *Jonah*, and lead them to revere and proclaim the power of that God whoſe miniſter *Jonah* was; which accordingly they did when the ſtorm ceaſed. What happened on this occaſion ſhews likewiſe, that the lot, as well as all other events, are at the diſpoſal of Divine Providence.

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

JONAH being caſt into the ſea, is ſwallowed by a great fiſh, in whoſe belly he remained three days and three nights. He prays to God, and thanks him for delivering him; and the fiſh caſts him upon the ſhore.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE manner in which God preſerved *Jonah*, cauſing him to be ſwallowed by a great fiſh, when he was caſt into the ſea, is a new miracle, which diſcovers the power of God, at the ſame time that it diſplays his goodneſs towards the prophet. Thus God ſhews his mercy, at the ſame time he is giving proofs of his juſtice; and when he chaſtiſes he deſigns to preſerve and bleſs. II. *Jonah*'s prayer to God, when he had brought him up from the depth of the ſea, and when the fiſh which had ſwallowed him up was going to caſt him upon the ſhore, ſhews the great faith and thankfulneſs of the prophet, as well as his return to his duty. III. The deliverance of *Jonah*, when he came out of the belly of the fiſh, is another wonderful event, which diſplays in an illuſtrious manner the power and goodneſs of God. But what we are chiefly to take notice of in this event is, that the miraculous manner in which God reſtored *Jonah* to life the third day, was a very expreſs type of the death and reſurrection of our Lord. This *Jeſus Chriſt* himſelf teaches us in the Goſpel, where he ſays, *That as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, ſo the Son of Man ſhall be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth, and on the third day he ſhall riſe again.*

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

JONAH being ſent a ſecond time to *Nineveh*, declares to the people of that great city, that it was going to be deſtroyed; at which the king and the inhabitants being moved, faſted and humbled themſelves before God, which prevailed upon him to ſpare them.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS hiſtory preſents us with the following reflections: I. That *Jonah*, who was afraid to go to *Nineveh* the firſt time the Lord ſent him, after he had felt the effects of God's power, went thither boldly. This example ſhews, that the divine corrections are of great uſe, as they ſerve to recover men from their errors, awaken the zeal of good men, and lead them to a more faithful diſcharge of their duty. II. God commanded *Jonah* to go to *Nineveh*, and threaten the inhabitants of that great city, which was ſunk in idolatry, luxury, and diſſoluteneſs, with a ſpeedy and total deſtruction. The warning God gave the *Ninevites* of their approaching ruin, is a proof on one hand, that he was provoked at the abominable crimes they were addicted to; and on the other, it is a token of his mercy towards that people. Thus the ſins of men, and particularly thoſe committed in great cities and the courts of princes, provoke God's wrath and indignation; and yet God in his mercy, threatens men before he puniſhes them, that they may prevent his judgments by repentance. III. The king of *Nineveh* and his people, who had been informed of the miracle that had happened in the perſon of *Jonah* humbled themſelves, and forſook their ſins, and God was reconciled towards them. This teaches us, that faſting, humiliation, and converſion, are moſt effectual means of averting the divine anger; and that God, who is infinitely gracious, forgives the moſt guilty, when they forſake their ſins. Laſtly, This

hiſtory

hiſtory ſhould call to mind what our Lord ſays in the Goſpel upon this occaſion; *The men of Nineveh ſhall riſe up in judgment againſt this generation, and ſhall condemn it, becauſe they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold a greater than Jonah is here.* By this we may judge, that Chriſtians, who are called to repentance by the voice of *Jeſus Chriſt* himſelf, ſhall certainly be condemned, if they refuſe to hear the call.

CHAP. IV.

JONAH, ſeeing God had ſpared the *Ninevites*, is grieved, and wiſhes for death: But God, to convince him how unreaſonable it was to grieve as he did, cauſed a plant to wither, under which the prophet was ſheltered.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE diſpleaſure of the prophet at God's ſparing the *Ninevites*, muſt be conſidered as one of thoſe weakneſſes which are ſometimes found in perſons of true piety, and which God graciouſly pardons. However, his diſpleaſure proceeded from a fear of being expoſed to ſome ill treatment in that country, and paſſing for a falſe prophet, ſince his threatenings had not been executed. II. It is to be obſerved, that God cauſed the plant to wither under whoſe ſhade *Jonah* ſat, and when the prophet grieved at it, he ſhewed him how unreaſonable it was to be ſo much concerned and afraid, becauſe God had ſpared *Nineveh*. What God ſaid to *Jonah* on this occaſion, expreſſes his great goodneſs towards this prophet, and eſpecially his great mercy towards all men, which was extended even to little children. The all-gracious God hates none of his creatures; and, far from making them miſerable, and taking pleaſure in their ſufferings, he is inclined to ſpare them, and do them good. This mercy of God ought to affect our hearts with

with love and gratitude towards him, inſpire us with ſentiments of love towards all men, and engage us to be *merciful, as our Father, which is in heaven, is merciful.*

The end of the Book of the Prophet JONAH.

THE

BOOK

OF THE PROPHET

MICAH.

ARGUMENT.

Micah *lived in the time of* Iſaiah *and of* Hoſea. *The deſign of his prophecy is, to reprove the* Jews *for their ſins, both thoſe of the kingdom of* Iſrael, *and chiefly thoſe of* Judah; *to denounce their ruin, and to foretel the reſtoration of the people of God, and the coming of the Meſſiah.*

CHAP. I.

I. THE prophet ſays, that God was preparing to deſtroy *Samariah*, the capital of the kingdom of *Iſrael*, and *Jeruſalem* the capital of *Judah*, becauſe theſe two kingdoms had given themſelves up to idolatry. II. He foretels likewiſe the ruin of ſeveral cities in the land of *Iſrael* and *Judah*, ſuch as *Saphir*, *Zaanin*, *Maroth*, *Lachiſh*, and ſome others.

REFLECTIONS *after reading the chapter.*

I, WE are to conſider in general, on this firſt chapter, that the event proved the truth and divinity of this prophecy; the kingdom of *Iſrael* having been deſtroyed by the *Aſſyrians*, and that of *Judah*, after it had

had been attacked by the ſame *Aſſyrians* in the reign of *Hezekiah*, being at laſt deſtroyed by the *Babylonians*, and the people led away into captivity. II. We ſhould take particular notice of that pompous deſcription of the majeſty and power of the Lord, which the prophet gives at the beginning of this Book. It teaches us, that God is a being of unbounded power, that nothing can reſiſt him, and that, as he employs this power to protect ſuch as fear him, ſo likewiſe he makes uſe of it to puniſh them that offend him. This we have an example of in the deſtruction of the chief cities of *Iſrael* and *Judah*, and even of theſe two whole kingdoms; who, for having provoked God to wrath by their idolatry, and by divers crimes, found themſelves at laſt deprived of his protection, and delivered into the hands of their enemies.

CHAP. II.

MICAH, after he had in the former chapter deſcribed the idolatry of the *Jews*, in this complains of the injuſtice and extortion committed among them, principally by their great men and rulers, and threatens them with ſudden deſtruction.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE prophet complains in this chapter, that *Jews*, and particularly their rulers, were covetous and unjuſt, and had no other deſign but to enrich themſelves, and made uſe of every means to this end. Moreover, he accuſes them of attempting to hinder the prophets of the Lord from ſpeaking to them, and for hearkening rather to falſe prophets. Laſtly, He proteſts, that God would ſoon make them feel the effects of his juſtice, by driving them out of the land wherein they dwelt. By this all men may ſee, that the ſins of perſons in authority, their injuſtice, violence, deſire of enriching themſelves, and contempt of God's warnings by his word and miniſters, is a mark of extreme corruption, and that God will one way or other

other take vengeance on thoſe ſins, when men obſtinately perſiſt in them.

CHAP. III.

THE prophet goes on in cenſuring the *Jews* for their ſins. I. He reproaches the magiſtrates for their avarice, injuſtice, and other miſdemeanors. II. He ſpeaks againſt the falſe prophets, who deceived the *Jews*, promiſing them peace, in hopes thereby of promoting their own intereſt. III. He declares, in the name of the Lord, that theſe ſins of the rulers of the people would cauſe God quickly to overthrow *Jeruſalem* and the temple, and reduce them to a ruinous heap.

REFLECTIONS.

THE cenſures contained in this chapter are addreſſed to the princes, and magiſtrates, and prophets of *Iſrael*. They ſhew, that the depravity of the *Jews* was general, and paſt remedy, in the time of the prophet *Micah*; but that the ſource of the corruption was in thoſe who were at the head of the nation. The judges and magiſtrates openly practiſed injuſtice, judged for rewards, and took bribes. Beſides, the prophets and prieſts, who would have oppoſed the corruption, were prevaricators and mercenary, who, by flattering the people, lulled them in their ſecurity. Theſe are the crimes for which the prophets very frequently reproach the *Jewiſh* princes, and for which *Micah* declares, that *Sion* and *Jeruſalem* ſhould be made an heap of ſtones. By this every one may ſee to what degree the crimes of perſons in a public character, as unrighteouſneſs in judgment, and infidelity in the miniſters of religion, provoke the Lord, and the great evils they bring upon the whole nation. This is what judges and magiſtrates; as well as paſtors, ſhould continually and ſeriouſly conſider. The miniſters of God, in particular, ought to imitate the holy confidence of *Micah*, and be, like him, filled with the ſpirit of God, to tell *Jacob his treſpaſs, and Iſrael his*

ſin; that is, to rebuke vice with great freedom in all perſons, and to declare to men all that God has commanded them to ſay in his name; taking heed above all things not to lull ſinners, by giving them falſe hopes, or concealing the miſeries that threaten them.

CHAP. IV.

THE prophet foretels: I. That all nations ſhould be called to the knowledge of the true God. II. That though the *Jews* were to go into captivity at *Babylon*, God would give them peace, and victory over their enemies.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter contains two prophecies: the firſt foretels, that all nations ſhould be enlightened with the knowledge of the true God, and ſhould come and worſhip and ſerve him. The ſtate of religion, and the divine worſhip at *Jeruſalem*, after the return of the *Jews* from the *Babyloniſh* captivity, does not fully anſwer the majeſty of this prophecy. But we have ſeen the accompliſhment of it in the calling of the Gentiles, and their converſion to Chriſtianity. This great and happy event ſhould convince us of the truth of the Chriſtian Religion, and the divinity of the prophecies which went before concerning it, and produce in us great gratitude towards God, and fervent zeal for his ſervice. *Micah*'s ſecond prediction ſhews, that the *Jews* ſhould be carried captives to *Babylon*, but that they ſhould return, and dwell in *Judea*, and that all their enemies ſhould be confounded. This prophecy was fulfilled as well as the former, which ſhould ſerve to confirm us ſtill more in the faith. We here likewiſe have an evident proof of the goodneſs of God, and his love to his people; ſince while he threatens the *Jews* to ſend them to *Babylon*, and deliver them to ſtrange nations, he promiſes to bring them again to their own land, and to make them triumph over all their enemies.

CHAP.

CHAP. V.

THE predictions in this chapter deſcribe, I. The wars that would be in *Judea*, the ſiege of *Jeruſalem*, the fall of the *Jewiſh* government, the coming of the Meſſiah, who was to be born at *Bethlehem*, and the eſtabliſhing of his kingdom. II. *Micah* foretels, that the *Iſraelites* ſhould be delivered from the *Aſſyrians* and *Babylonians*, who were to be given into the hand of their enemies, and utterly deſtroyed.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter contains ſeveral predictions, which have all been verified by the event. We here ſee the miſeries which afflicted the *Jews* before the coming of our Lord: But above all, we here meet with an expreſs prophecy, foretelling that the Meſſiah ſhould come out of the town of *Bethlehem*. This prophecy perfectly agrees with *Jeſus Chriſt*, as St. *Matthew* remarks in the ſecond chapter of his Goſpel, and can be applied to no other. The other predictions of the prophet have likewiſe been fulfilled. The *Jews* were delivered and protected by kings raiſed up by God to that end, and returned into *Judea*; the *Aſſyrian* and *Babylonian* empires came to an end, and *Babylon* was utterly deſtroyed. So that the divinity of the prophecies, and the truth of God's promiſes, cannot be called in queſtion, any more than the truth of religion in general, and our obligation to practiſe the duties it preſcribes.

CHAP. VI.

I. THE Lord complains, after a very earneſt and affecting manner, of the ingratitude of the *Jews* who, notwithſtanding his favours at all times beſtowed upon them, rebelled againſt him, and forſook him. II. He tells them, that their ſacrifices and oblations were not able to turn away his wrath; and that the

only way to become acceptable to him, was to do what was right. Laſtly, he reproaches them for the injuſtice, deceit, and violence, which were committed among them. But he eſpecially accuſes them of keeping the ſtatutes of *Omri* and *Ahab;* that is, of following the idolatrous worſhip which thoſe kings had introduced in the kingdom of the ten tribes; and he declares that the Lord, provoked by all theſe crimes, would overtake them with his judgments.

REFLECTIONS.

FROM this chapter we learn. I. That God is perfectly juſt, and at the ſame time full of goodneſs towards men; that he only ſeeks to make them happy; and that he loads them with his favours, to engage them to love and fear him. This *Micah* expreſſes in moſt affecting terms, when he ſays, that God pleads with his people, and aſks them, *O my people, what have I done unto thee, and wherein have I wearied thee? teſtify againſt me.* Theſe words ſhew, in the cleareſt manner, that men are guilty of foul ingratitude when they rebel againſt a good and gracious God; and that if they thereby bring down his wrath upon them, they are without excuſe. II. The next inſtruction is, *That it is not with ſacrifices and burnt-offerings, or oblations, that God will be pleaſed; but that he has ſhewed us what is good; and what the Lord requires of us, even to do juſtly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God.* By theſe words God teaches us, that the only worſhip he receives is that which is attended with uprightneſs and innocence of life, with charity and humility of heart. Theſe are the eſſential duties of religion; for the neglect of which the *Jews*, who were otherwiſe careful enough in the practice of the ceremonies, and external duties of divine worſhip, periſhed in a miſerable manner. Laſtly, Since God declares, he will not juſtify the unjuſt, thoſe who make uſe of falſe weights, and falſe meaſures, and rob their neighbour, either by violence,

or

or by fraud and deceit; we cannot at all doubt but theſe ſins are very odious in his ſight, and will bring down the curſe of God upon ſuch as are guilty of them.

CHAP. VII.

THIS chapter contains two things: I. *Micah* laments the extreme corruption of the *Jews*, and the vices that reigned among them. II. He promiſes them a happy reſtoration, and aſſures them, that, after God had delivered them, for ſome time, into the hand of their enemies, and had juſtly chaſtiſed them, he would give them peace again, and would do for them ſuch wonderful things as he had done in the times of their forefathers; for which the prophet bleſſes and praiſes the Lord.

REFLECTIONS.

HERE we may obſerve three things for our edification; which are, the complaints of the prophet, his comforting the *Jews*, and his thankſgivings to God. I. He complains of the ſtrange depravity of the *Jews*, ſaying that one could not find a good man among them; that they ſought nothing but to do miſchief to one another; that ſincere people were ſo ſcarce among them, that they could not truſt their neareſt relations; that magiſtrates and judges ran after bribes, and were guilty of all kinds of iniquity. This picture of the ſtrange corruption of the *Jews*, ſhews the juſtice of thoſe puniſhments with which God viſited them; and we may obſerve from thence, that when the fear of God, uprightneſs and ſincerity are baniſhed out of a country, when deceit and fraud prevail, and judges take bribes and rewards, the judgments of God will ſoon unavoidably fall upon the land for ſuch abominations. II. We muſt take good heed to thoſe words wherewith *Micah* comforted the people of God, when they were quickly to fall into the hands of their enemies: *Rejoice not againſt me, O mine enemy: when I fall,*

fall, I ſhall ariſe; when I ſit in darkneſs, the Lord ſhall be a light unto me. I will bear the indignation of the Lord, becauſe I have ſinned againſt him, until he plead my cauſe, and execute judgment for me. Theſe admirable words teach us God's way of dealing with men, and in particular with his church, when they ſin againſt him. He chaſtens them, but does not forſake them, nor ſuffer their enemies to prevail againſt them.

III. This conduct of the Lord ſhould ſtir us up to acknowledge and praiſe his power, wiſdom, and goodneſs; and to ſay with the prophet, *Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and paſſeth by the tranſgreſſion of the remnant of his heritage? He retaineth not his anger for ever, becauſe he delighteth in mercy; he will have compaſſion upon us, and will forgive our iniquities.*

The end of the Book of the Prophet MICAH.

THE

THE

BOOK

OF THE PROPHET

NAHUM.

ARGUMENT.

The prophecy of Nahum, *is a prediction of the deſtruction of* Nineveh, *and the end of the empire of the* Aſſyrians. *It is thought* Nahum *lived about eighty years after* Jonah, *who had alſo propheſied againſt the* Ninevites.

CHAP. I.

NAHUM gives a noble deſcription of the majeſty and power of God, to ſhew, that the *Aſſyrians* could not reſiſt him, and that, notwithſtanding their ſtrength, they ſhould be deſtroyed, whilſt the *Jews*, whom they had uſed ſo ill, ſhould be reſtored and preſerved.

REFLECTIONS *after reading the chapter.*

I. IT muſt be obſerved upon this Book of *Nahum*, that God raiſed ſeveral prophets, not only to foretel the deſtruction of the *Jews*, but likewiſe that of other nations, and particularly of the *Aſſyrians*, whoſe empire was exceeding powerful, and who had greatly oppreſſed the people of God; their kings *Pul*, *Tiglath-*

pileſer,

pileſer, *Salmaneſer*, and *Sennacherib*, having come, at ſeveral different times, into the land of *Iſrael*, and made great havock there. Theſe predictions muſt have comforted the *Jews*, and convinced them, and the idolatrous nations themſelves, that it was the Almighty God, and the Lord of the world, who permitted theſe nations to injure and oppreſs his people, and who ſpake by the mouth of his prophets. II. It is neceſſary to obſerve, in the next place, that *Jonah*, having been ſent to *Nineveh* about eighty years before, the *Ninevites* had then averted the wrath of God by their repentance; but that afterwards returning to their iniquities, and oppreſſing the *Jews*, *Nahum* was ſent to foretel the deſtruction of their city, and of the whole *Aſſyrian* monarchy. God pardons men upon their humiliation, and bears with them; but when they return to their iniquities, he at laſt executes the decrees of his juſtice. III. We muſt know, that the predictions of *Nahum*, made at a time when the *Aſſyrians* were ſtill very powerful and formidable, were entirely fulfilled at the end of about ninety years, when *Nabopolaſſar*, father to the great *Nebuchadnezzar*, king of *Babylon*, deſtroyed *Nineveh*, and put an end to the *Aſſyrian* empire; which is a ſtrong proof of the divinity of this Book. Laſtly, what *Nahum* ſays at the beginning of this Book, with ſo much ſtrength and elegance, concerning the infinite power and juſtice of God, teaches us, that ſince God is ſo great and powerful, thoſe who offend him cannot reſiſt him; and that nothing can hurt thoſe who fear him, and put their truſt in him.

CHAP. II.

THE prophet foretels, that the city of *Nineveh*, and the *Aſſyrian* monarchy, of which *Nineveh* was the capital, ſhould be aſſaulted by powerful enemies, and that notwithſtanding its ſtrength, it ſhould be taken, plundered, and laid intirely deſolate. This deſolation is here repreſented in a figurative and prophetical manner.

REFLEC-

REFLECTIONS.

IN this chapter we meet with a deſcription of what befel the *Aſſyrians*, and the city of *Nineveh*, ſome time after this prophecy. This ancient, powerful, and opulent city, was taken by the *Babylonians*, its houſes and palaces were deſtroyed, its inhabitants became a prey to the conquerors, and the *Aſſyrian* monarchy came to an end. So conſiderable an event ſhould convince us more and more, that the predictions of the prophets came from God; that there is a providence preſiding over all things with juſtice and wiſdom, and with a power which nothing can reſiſt; and that the ſame God, who thus puniſhes and abaſes kingdoms and nations, is the judge of all men, and will render to every one according to his works.

CHAP. III.

NAHUM continues to foretel the deſtruction of *Nineveh*, which he calls the city of blood, on account of the cruelties practiſed in it. He ſays, that that powerful and magnificent city ſhould be plundered and ſacked, becauſe it was full of pride and injuſtice, and defiled with its adulteries, that is, by the idolatry that prevailed in it; to this he adds, that as *No*, which was a populous city in *Egypt*, (and which is ſuppoſed to be the famous city of *Thebes*) was deſtroyed by *Sennacherib*, ſo ſhould *Nineveh* be deſtroyed; and that neither the riches, nor the mighty men, nor all the people in it, however numerous, ſhould be able to ſecure it; and that it ſhould never recover from its ruins.

REFLECTIONS.

IN the deſtruction of *Nineveh*, and of the *Aſſyrian* monarchy, which was one of the moſt ancient and moſt flouriſhing empires in the world, we muſt obſerve, the almighty power of God, who when he pleaſes overturns the greateſt ſtates. Beſides God's infinite power,

power, we may here alſo conſider his juſtice; ſince it was the pride of the *Aſſyrians*, their luxury, injuſtice, idolatry, and the evil they had done the *Iſraelites*, that induced God to deſtroy them. Thus it will always be; God will ever humble the proud, and puniſh thoſe that live in wickedneſs and impiety; eſpecially when they obſtinately perſiſt in their ſins. Laſtly, it muſt be conſidered, that God cauſed the deſtruction of *Nineveh* to be foretold long beforehand by *Nahum*, for the conſolation of his people, who were to be afflicted and invaded by the kings of *Aſſyria*. He did it likewiſe to prevent theſe idolatrous nations from glorying in their victories over the *Jews*; and that the whole world might ſee, that if the *Jews* were vanquiſhed, it was by the will and permiſſion of God, who meant to chaſtiſe his people by means of the *Aſſyrians*.

THE

BOOK

OF THE PROPHET

HABAKKUK.

ARGUMENT.

Habakkuk *propheſied a little before the taking of* Jeruſalem, *and near the time of* Jeremiah. *He foretold, that God, being provoked by the ſins of his people, was about to deliver them to the* Chaldeans *their enemies; and that afterwards, the* Chaldeans *alſo ſhould feel the effects of the divine vengeance.*

CHAP. I.

IN the firſt chapter *Habakkuk* does three things, I. He complains, that the corruption of the *Jews* was come to its height. II. He ſays, that God would bring the *Chaldeans* upon them to deſtroy them. III. He prays God not to forſake his people, to avenge the injuries they received, and not to ſuffer their enemies to triumph over them, nor to aſcribe their victories to their own ſtrength, and to their idols.

REFLECTIONS *after reading the chapter.*

THE reflections to be made upon the three parts of this chapter are theſe. I. The firſt relates to the ſtate of the *Jews* before their deſtruction. The complaints with which *Habakkuk* begins his prophecy, ſhew, that nothing

nothing but violence and injuſtice was to be found among them; the law was no longer of any force to reſtrain them, juſtice was trampled under foot, and all kinds of iniquity were committed by them. This was the true cauſe of the evils that came upon them: and thus does God uſually puniſh thoſe who give themſelves up to wickedneſs and impiety. II. In the deſcription the prophet gives of the coming of the *Chaldeans*, of their cruelty, and of the waſte they would make in *Judea*, we ought to conſider, not ſo much the power of the *Chaldeans*, as the juſtice of God, who made uſe of them to puniſh the *Jews*. III. *Habakkuk*'s prayer to God, imploring his aſſiſtance againſt the impiety and pride of the king of the *Chaldeans*, who boaſted of his victories, and attributed them to his falſe gods, teaches us, to have recourſe to God in all dangers and neceſſities; and to do this with extraordinary zeal and confidence, when God's glory is concerned. This prayer ſhould moreover convince us, that God is righteous; that his eyes are too pure to behold iniquity; that he cannot ſuffer injuſtice and violence; and that he is engaged by his own glory to confound the proud, and all who haughtily exalt themſelves againſt him.

CHAP. II.

THE prophet having prayed, in the foregoing chapter, for the *Jews*, God anſwers him in this, and aſſures him, that although the deliverance of his people, and the puniſhment of the *Babylonians*, were delayed for a while, yet both of them ſhould infallibly come to paſs; that he would puniſh the *Babylonians* for their cruelties and diſſoluteneſs, and, above all, for their impiety and idolatry; that he would make them know, that it was in vain they truſted in their falſe gods.

REFLECTIONS.

FROM the reading of this chapter we may learn, I. To wait with patience, faith, and firm confidence, the accompliſhment of God's promiſes, and not to be diſcouraged

diſcouraged when he defers the execution of them. This is the inſtruction which the prophet gives us, when he ſays, *Though it tarry, wait for it, becauſe it will ſurely come, it will not tarry:* And *the juſt ſhall live by faith.* II. The prophet teaches us, that the *Babylonians* would infallibly be deſtroyed for their pride, injuſtice, rapine, and idolatry. Thus we learn, that the end of God's judgments is to puniſh men for the crimes they commit, and to ſhew that he is the ſupreme Lord and judge over all the earth. Further, theſe threatenings of *Habakkuk* were executed; the *Babylonians* felt the divine vengeance, as the *Aſſyrians* had done before them; and by this means, thoſe two formidable powers, who had treated the *Jews* with ſo great cruelty, became examples of the divine vengeance in the ſight of all men. Laſtly, What the prophet ſays of the puniſhment God would inflict upon the king of *Babylon*, for his injuſtice and violence, is applicable to all ſuch as propoſe to enrich and raiſe themſelves by ſinful methods. Wherefore, we ought to conſider theſe words of *Habakkuk* with great attention: *Wo unto him that coveteth an evil covetouſneſs to his houſe*, and what follows on this ſubject. This curſe does not leſs regard private perſons than kings; it threatens all thoſe that heap up riches by wicked ways; and daily experience ſhews, that ill gotten goods are not long enjoyed, and do commonly bring upon the unjuſt, and their families, all kinds of miſeries.

CHAP. III.

THIS hymn of *Habakkuk* celebrates in lofty expreſſions the majeſty of God, which had formerly appeared, when he publiſhed the law on mount *Sinai*, and in the wonders he wrought for the *Jews*, in ſubduing the kings and people of the land of *Canaan*, and of the countries round about, and ſettling the children of *Iſrael* in that country. The deſign of this hymn was to comfort the *Jews*, and give them full aſſurance, that God would not forſake them, but would again

diſplay his power in delivering them from the oppreſſion of the *Chaldeans*.

REFLECTIONS.

THE uſe we are to make of this hymn is, I. To learn from hence to remember the mercies of God, to meditate upon them continually, and chiefly to reflect on the wonders he has wrought for us in redeeming us by *Jeſus Chriſt* our Lord, ſince thoſe are infinitely greater than what *Habukkuk* celebrates in this chapter. II. The conſideration of the effects of the power and love of God towards us, ſhould inflame our hearts with love and gratitude; and above all ſhould fill us with firm confidence in him, even in the greateſt adverſities. God has in all ages given evident proofs of his power and juſtice; and ſince his love to his church, and to his children is always the ſame, it is impoſſible he ſhould ever forſake thoſe who are his, and who hope in him.

The end of the Book of the Prophet HABAKKUK.

THE

THE

BOOK

OF THE PROPHET

ZEPHANIAH.

ARGUMENT.

Zephaniah *was ſent to the* Jews *of* Judah, *under the reign of* Joſiah, *and ſome time before their deſtruction, to exhort them to renounce their idolatry and other ſins, and be converted and to threaten them, that if they perſevered in their impenitence, they ſhould certainly be deſtroyed by the* Chaldeans.

CHAP. I.

I. *ZEPHANIAH* declares that the wrath of God was ſhortly to fall upon *Jeruſalem* and its inhabitants, upon the royal family, and upon the whole kingdom of *Judah*, becauſe the *Jews* had provoked the Lord by their crimes, particularly by the worſhip of falſe gods, and by their impenitence. II. He deſcribes the horror of that deſolation, and ſays, that neither their riches nor ſtrength ſhould deliver them.

REFLECTIONS *after reading the chapter.*

I. GOD, in his great goodneſs to the *Jews*, raiſed up *Zephaniah*, under the reign of *Joſiah*, at a time when every thing was in confuſion, and the *Jews* were addicted to idolatry, impiety, and the moſt ſhameful crimes.

crimes. The prophet had orders from God to exhort them to repentance, and to denounce their total deſtruction; which *Huldah* the propheteſs foretold at the ſame time. Thus God gives men notice and threatens them, before he puniſhes them, that they may by their repentance prevent this judgments. II. This chapter repreſents the extreme deſolation to which the *Jews* would be reduced; the ſtrict account God would call them to, and the ſevere and exemplary puniſhment they would be expoſed to for their ſins, which was brought to paſs afterwards by the *Egyptians* and *Aſſyrians* invading *Judea*, and at length by the *Chaldeans*, who took and deſtroyed the city of *Jeruſalem*. We may learn from hence, that nothing can reſiſt the divine power and juſtice; and that it is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, when he puniſhes. Above all, the deſcription that the prophet gives of the day of the *Jews* deſtruction, ſhould remind us of the great day of judgment, and of the terror of the wicked at that time. Laſtly, we ſhould reflect on the cauſe of theſe miſeries which befel the *Jews*. They had forſaken the Lord, and corrupted his worſhip; and while they remained in this ſtate of rebellion and impiety, they ſtill flattered themſelves they were ſecure from danger; and that God would bring no evil upon them. Thus God puniſhes the profanation of the divine ſervice and impenitency, eſpecially in thoſe to whom he has in a particular manner made himſelf known. But what is a mark of the utmoſt degree of obſtinacy, and more eſpecially engages God not to ſpare ſinners, is their not dreading his judgments, though they are ſo exceeding guilty, nor endeavouring to avert them by repentance.

CHAP. II.

THIS chapter contains two things: I. An exhortation to the *Jews* to confeſs their ſins, and to be converted, before God executed upon them the decrees of his wrath. II. A prophecy, ſignifying, that God would

would ſave a remnant of that people; that he would cauſe the *Jews* to dwell again in the land of *Canaan;* and that the neighbouring nations, the *Philiſtines, Moabites, Ammonites* and the *Ethiopians,* ſhould be rooted out, and the *Aſſyrians* too, who were at that time ſo powerful, and *Nineveh* their capital city.

REFLECTIONS.

WE are here taught, I. That when God appears provoked, the ſureſt way to prevent the effects of his wrath, is ſpeedily to repent, and turn to him, before he puts his threatenings in execution. II. That the piety, zeal and uprightneſs of thoſe that fear God, are ſometimes the means of turning away his anger; and that the Lord never fails to remember the righteous, when he puniſhes the wicked. This is the reflection to be made on theſe words of *Zephaniah: Seek ye the Lord, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought his judgment, ſeek righteouſneſs, ſeek meekneſs: It may be, ye ſhall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger.* III. The prophet foretels, that God would bring the *Jews* back from their captivity; and that the nations which were their enemies ſhould be utterly laid waſte. Theſe predictions were not long before they were fulfilled. The king of *Babylon* ſubdued the ſeveral nations here mentioned, in particular, the deſtruction of the famous city *Nineveh,* and of the *Aſſyrian* empire, was ſeen at that time. All theſe events ſhew, that God is a righteous judge; and that he reſtrains the malice, pride and power of nations and kings; that he takes in hand the cauſe of his church, and preſerves it amidſt the revolutions that happen in the world, and in ſpite of the attempts of thoſe who deſire to deſtroy it.

CHAP. III.

ZEPHANIAH denounces the utmoſt miſeries againſt *Jeruſalem,* becauſe the *Jews* had not hearkened to the voice of the Lord. He complains of the unjuſt acts committed by magiſtrates; of the lies of

the falſe prophets; of the impiety of the prieſts, and of the obſtinacy of the people, who had made a right uſe neither of the patience of God, nor his corrections, nor of the example of other nations, and particularly of the *Jews* of the ten tribes, who were already deſtroyed. He threatens them with a ſpeedy deſolation upon that account; promiſing, however, that God would do them good, and give them further reaſon to rejoice, by bringing them again from ſtrange nations into their own land, and pouring out his bleſſings upon them.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE prophet here complains, that the city of *Jeruſalem* had refuſed to hear the voice of God, and to receive inſtruction; that the magiſtrates, prieſts and prophets, were impious, unjuſt, and profane; and that the whole nation was extremely hardened; to which he adds, that though God was in the midſt of them, and daily did all that was neceſſary to bring them back to him, they were ſtrangers both to ſhame and repentance. Theſe complaints ought to be ſeriouſly conſidered, as they ſhew us, that God is always juſt and good; and therefore, that we may not aſcribe his judgments, and the evils that befal men, to any other cauſe than their wickedneſs, and their reſiſting the voice of the Lord. Above all, we may learn from this chapter, that the greateſt misfortune that can happen to any people, and which moſt certainly expoſes them to the divine vengeance, is when their ſpiritual or temporal rulers neglect the duties of their calling, and trample under foot the laws of religion and juſtice. II. We muſt take notice in the next place, that God had cauſed the *Jews* to ſee the deſtruction of ſeveral nations, and eſpecially of their brethren the *Iſraelites*, that they might learn by theſe examples to fear him; but becauſe they had perſevered in their rebellion, the fire of his wrath was going to conſume them. Thoſe who ſee the examples of divine juſtice, and

and the miſeries which befal others, and do not improve by them, aggravate their guilt and puniſhment, and have reaſon to expect the ſevereſt effects of the divine vengeance. Laſtly, The promiſes which *Zephaniah* adds to theſe threatenings, teach us, that as God afflicts men only to chaſtiſe and purify them, he removes the afflictions as ſoon as they return to him. Thus he reſtored peace to the *Jews*, and recalled them from *Babylon*, when the ſeventy years of their captivity were accompliſhed.

The end of the Book of the Prophet ZEPHANIAH.

THE

BOOK

OF THE PROPHET

HAGGAI.

ARGUMENT.

The three laſt prophets, Haggai, Zechariah, *and* Malachi, *propheſied after the return of the* Jews *from* Babylon. Haggai *was ſent to exhort the* Jews *to rebuild the temple of* Jeruſalem, *and to declare to them that the Meſſiah would ſoon come, and that the glory of his kingdom would be very great.*

CHAP. I.

IN this chapter, the prophet reproaches the *Jews* for being more concerned in building their own houſes, than in rebuilding the temple: He tells them, that their negligence and want of zeal was the reaſon that God had puniſhed them by a dearth; whereupon *Zerubbabel* the governor of *Jeruſalem*, and *Joſhua* the chief prieſt, and all the people, ſet about building the houſe of God.

REFLECTIONS *after reading the chapter.*

HAGGAI's reproof of the *Jews* for neglecting to rebuild the temple, while they took ſo much pains about their own houſes, leads us to conſider, that it

is

is a very great fault to be more concerned for our temporal intereſts, and for the conveniencies of this life, than for the glory of God, and his ſervice. It muſt next be obſerved, that as God puniſhed the lukewarmneſs and negligence of the *Jews*, by not bleſſing their labours, and by ſending them dearth and barrenneſs, ſo they who want zeal for the ſervice of God, deprive themſelves of his bleſſing; whereas he bleſſes thoſe who ſeek firſt the kingdom of God and its righteouſneſs, and together with ſpiritual, grants them alſo temporal bleſſings. Laſtly, The deference which *Zerubbabel*, the governor of *Jeruſalem*, and *Joſhua* the high prieſt, and all the people, paid to the remonſtrances of *Haggai*, teaches us, to receive with ſubmiſſion the divine exhortations; and that thoſe who are in authority, either in church or ſtate, ſhould employ themſelves with courage, and to the utmoſt of their power, in works of piety, and in promoting the true worſhip of God.

CHAP. II.

I. THE prophet foretels, that though the temple of the *Jews* then building, was inconſiderable in compariſon with that built by *Solomon*, yet that the glory of that ſecond temple ſhould be greater than the glory of the former, and that the bleſſing of God ſhould ſpread itſelf from thence over all nations. II. *Haggai* declares, that the *Jews* and the ſacrifices had been reputed unclean before God, and he had ſent barrenneſs among them, whilſt they neglected to rebuild his temple, but that for the future he would bleſs them. Laſtly, He foretels, that God would deſtroy many kingdoms, and recompence the zeal of *Zerubbabel*, governor of the *Jews*.

REFLECTIONS.

THE moſt important reflections to be made upon this chapter, relates to the prophecy of *Haggai*, which foretels that the glory of the ſecond temple, which was

was built after the captivity, ſhould be much greater than that of the firſt temple, which *Solomon* had built, and which had been burnt by the *Chaldeans*. Here it muſt be obſerved, that the temple of *Solomon* was much richer and more magnificent than that built in the time of *Haggai*; but that nevertheleſs, the glory of the ſecond would be much greater, becauſe the Meſſiah was to enter into it. This prophecy, the truth and accompliſhment of which can be ſhewn no other way, plainly foretels, that the Meſſiah ſhould come whilſt the ſecond temple was ſtanding; and as that temple no longer ſubſiſts, we muſt neceſſarily confeſs, that the Meſſiah is come, and that this Meſſiah is *Jeſus Chriſt* our Lord. This is one of the cleareſt and moſt expreſs prophecies in the Old Teſtament. Another conſideration which this chapter ſuggeſts to us, is, that the *Jews* were eſteemed unclean, and God puniſhed them by ſcarcity, whilſt they neglected to rebuild the temple. From whence we may learn, that we can have no ſhare in the divine bleſſings, when we are careleſs, and indifferent in what relates to his ſervice. Laſtly, It muſt be remarked, that, according to the predictions of *Haggai*, the *Perſian* and *Grecian* monarchies, which oppoſed the *Jews*, were deſtroyed, as that of the *Babylonians* had been; that the *Jews* were ſupported in their own land; that *Zerubbabel*, and his deſcendant, ſubſiſted in a glorious ſtate for a very long time; and that at length our Lord was born of his poſterity. Thus have the predictions of the prophets always been fulfilled, and the promiſes of God never failed of being put in execution.

The end of the Book of the Prophet HAGGAI.

THE

THE

BOOK

OF THE PROPHET

ZECHARIAH.

ARGUMENT.

Zachariah *was ſent at the ſame time, and upon the ſame occaſion as* Haggai, *which was to encourage the* Jews *to rebuild the temple. In this Book there are a great many viſions and figures, deſcribing what was to happen to the* Jews. *There are likewiſe ſeveral prophecies relating to* Jeſus Chriſt, *and particularly to his royal entry into* Jeruſalem; *to the thirty pieces of ſilver which* Judas *received to betray him; to the deſtruction of the* Jews, *and the calling of the Gentiles.*

CHAP. I.

IN this chapter *Zechariah* does two things: I. He exhorts the *Jews* to repentance, and not to imitate their fathers, who, for deſpiſing the remonſtrances of the prophets, had been ſent into captivity. II. He relates two viſions; one of a man riding upon a red horſe; the meaning of which was, that God would have compaſſion upon *Jeruſalem*; that he would reſtore the *Jews*, and watch over them for their good: the other is, the viſion of the four horns, and four carpenters;

carpenters; which ſignified that God would defeat the deſigns and endeavours of the enemies of his people, and would bring down the power of the kingdoms and nations which had ſet themſelves againſt them.

REFLECTIONS *after reading the chapter:*

WHAT we are here to conſider, is, I. That exhortation to repentance, which God addreſſed to the *Jews: Return ye to me, and I will return to you.* Theſe words ſhew, that God is ready to pardon, and reſtore his peace and favour to thoſe who have provoked him by their ſins, as ſoon as they return ſincerely to him. II. God declares to the *Jews*, that their fathers refuſing to be converted, and to hearken to the voice of the prophets, who exhorted them to turn from their iniquities, was the reaſon why he had put in execution the threatenings denounced againſt them by thoſe prophets. This is a warning to us, not to abuſe the long ſuffering of God, nor deſpiſe either his exhortations or threatenings. III. God ſent viſions and an angel to *Zechariah*, to aſſure him, that he was moved with compaſſion at the ſad condition of *Jeruſalem*; and that he had reſolved to raiſe it from its ruins and to deliver it from the oppreſſion it laboured under, and to ſecure it from the plots and attempts of its enemies. Theſe words of the angel are very remarkable, and evidently diſcover to us that God ſees and governs all events eſpecially what concerns his church; that what ever ſtate it is in, he is its defender, and never leaves it in the hands of thoſe that ſeek to deſtroy it.

CHAP. II.

I. GOD ſhews *Zechariah*, in a viſion, a man holding a meaſuring line in his hand; which the angel explains, by telling him, that *Jeruſalem* ſhould be rebuilt, and inhabited again; and that God would be a wall to it. II. The prophet invites the *Jews*, which

which were ſtill at *Babylon*, to return to *Jeruſalem*; denounces the judgments of God againſt their enemies; exhorts the *Jews* to rejoice, and foretels that other nations ſhould join with them, and become likewiſe the people of God.

REFLECTIONS.

WE ſee in this chapter, as well as in the whole prophecy of *Zechariah*, very plain proofs of God's love and protection of the *Jewiſh* nation; as he himſelf expreſſes in theſe words: *I will be a wall of fire round about Jeruſalem. Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Sion: For lo I come, and will dwell in the midſt of thee, ſaith the Lord.* The truth of theſe promiſes appears in the recalling the *Jews* that were captives at *Babylon*, and in the favours which God granted them after their return to *Jeruſalem*; but theſe promiſes are yet more applicable to the Chriſtian Church; which is the true *Sion*, that ſhall continue for ever, and into which other nations were to be admitted, and become the people of God; he dwelling in the midſt of them, as their everlaſting protector. Theſe reflections are very proper to fill with confidence all the true members of the church, and confirm them more and more in godlineſs.

CHAP. III.

ZECHARIAH ſees the high prieſt *Joſhua* ſtanding before the angel, with *Satan*, that is to ſay, an adverſary ſtanding by him. This adverſary repreſented the people that hated the *Jews*, and hindered them from rebuilding their city and temple. But the angel threatens this adverſary with the judgments of God; commands *Joſhua* to put on his prieſtly garments, and promiſes him, as well as the *Jews*, a particular bleſſing and protection. This is expreſſed in this chapter by the viſion there ſet down, and by the ſtone which had ſeven eyes: Theſe eyes repreſent the knowledge of God and his providence, which ruleth over all. The

deſign

deſign of all this was to ſhew, that God would preſerve *Jeruſalem* and the temple, in ſpite of the oppoſition of their enemies.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter preſents us with theſe three obſervations: I. That as the enemies of the *Jews* formerly with all their might oppoſed the building of the temple, and reſtoring the divine ſervice; ſo thoſe who labour to promote the glory of God, almoſt always meet with oppoſition, but ought by no means to be diſcouraged by it. II. The angel threatens the adverſary of the *Jews*, that God would reſtrain his malice, and defeat his attempts; that the high prieſt *Joſhua* ſhould execute his office in the temple; and that divine ſervice ſhould be there performed as before. Theſe words of the angel clearly prove, that God was the protector of *Jeruſalem*, and of thoſe who had the divine worſhip at heart; and aſſure us, that he will always confound the enemies of true religion, and of his church, and will be the defender and ſupport of all ſuch as ſerve him faithfully. III. We muſt here remember the remark which St. *Peter* and St. *Jude* made upon theſe words of the angel to the adverſary, who repreſented the enemies of the *Jews*: *The Lord rebuke thee*; upon which words theſe apoſtles obſerve, that ſince the angels themſelves do not pronounce the ſentence of condemnation againſt ſuch as are exalted in dignity, but refer them to the judgment of God; it is never lawful to revile and ſpeak evil of the higher powers, but that we ought always to ſpeak of them with meekneſs and reſpect.

CHAP. IV.

IN this chapter *Zechariah* relates the viſion of the golden candleſtick and the two olive trees; which viſion implied, that *Jeruſalem* and the temple ſhould be reſtored by the divine aſſiſtance, and by the care of *Joſhua*, the high prieſt, and of *Zerubbabel*, the governor; who

who are here called the two olive trees, and the two ſons of oil, that is, the two anointed of the Lord.

REFLECTIONS.

THE viſion in this chapter teaches us, that as God formerly protected *Zerubbabel* and *Joſhua*, the two chief rulers of the *Jews*, at a time when they met with great oppoſition; ſo he bleſſes and ſupports all his faithful ſervants; and that, in particular, he will defend and bleſs thoſe, who, being in the magiſtracy, or in the holy miniſtry, employ themſelves zealouſly for his glory, and for the edification of his church.

CHAP. V.

THE fifth chapter contains two viſions: the firſt is, the viſion of the flying roll, or book, wherein were contained the curſes of God's law, denounced againſt thieves and perjured perſons; which viſion repreſents the divine vengeance purſuing the hypocritical and ungodly *Jews*. The time in which *Zechariah* propheſied, gives room to ſuppoſe, that theſe threatenings regard thoſe who made uſe of fraud and ſacrilege with reſpect to what had been dedicated to the rebuilding the temple, and reſtoring the divine ſervice. This appears from the reproaches of the prophet *Malachi*, who propheſied at that time. The ſecond viſion is that of the ephah, which was a meaſure uſed to meaſure corn with; and the ſenſe of the viſion ſeems to be, that the *Jews*, having filled up the meaſure of their iniquities, were carried away captives, and that by this means their ſin had been, as it were, carried away to *Babylon*.

REFLECTIONS.

THE firſt of *Zechariah*'s viſions here ſet down engages us to conſider, that the curſe of God purſues the unjuſt, perjured perſons, and more particularly ungodly, ſacrilegious, and hypocritical men, who deſpiſe

ſpiſe religion, and profane the ſervice of God. This curſe cleaves to their perſons, their goods, and even to their poſterity; God puniſhes them by this means, making them ſerve as an example of his juſt vengeance. In the ſecond viſion we may remark, that as the *Jews* were carried captives to *Babylon* for the puniſhment of their ſins, in ſuch manner, however, that after they had remained a long time in that country, for their puniſhment, God brought them from thence; ſo likewiſe God puniſhes and chaſtiſes men, when they have filled up the meaſure of their iniquities; but he does it with an intent to recover them, that they may become afterwards the objects of his love.

CHAP. VI.

I. AN angel ſhews *Zechariah* four chariots, which were going to the ſeveral parts of the world. This emblem ſeems to denote that there had happened, and would happen, great changes in the empires of the world; and particularly, in the four-monarchies, which *Daniel* and the other prophets had ſpoken of; and that amidſt all theſe changes, Providence would preſerve the *Jews*, and execute judgments on their enemies. II. The angel orders the prophet to receive the gold and ſilver which ſome conſiderable perſons would give him, and make therewith crowns for *Joſhua*, the high prieſt, and to put them into the temple for a memorial that *Joſhua* ſhould exerciſe the prieſt's office, and that the temple and the divine ſervice ſhould continue.

REFLECTIONS.

THOUGH the viſions here related are attended with ſome obſcurity, yet this we ſee in general, that there had happened, and were ſtill to happen, great revolutions in the world; and particularly, in the ſtates and kingdoms that had any relation to the people of God; but that the Lord would ſo over-rule all theſe events, that the kings and people ſhould do nothing but

but what God had determined, and that the *Jews* ſhould always experience his love and protection. The ſecond part of this chapter ſhews more particularly, that God would reward in a glorious manner the zeal of *Joſhua*, the high prieſt, and would keep up his worſhip at *Jeruſalem*. From whence we may conclude, that if God formerly protected the *Jews* and their rulers in troubleſome times, and puniſhed the princes and kingdoms which had made war againſt them, he will never ſuffer all the powers of the world or hell to prevail againſt his church; and that *Jeſus Chriſt*, the great high prieſt and king of his church, will always ſupport it, and deſtroy whatever oppoſes his kingdom.

CHAP. VII, VIII.

THESE two chapters treat of the ſame ſubject, and ſhould therefore be read together. The *Jews* having enquired of the prieſts, whether they ſhould continue to keep the faſts, as they had done during the ſeventy years of the captivity, *Zechariah*, by way of reply, does theſe four things; I. He aſks them, whether they had faſted truly, and for God's ſake? II. He adds, that God had fulfilled the threatenings of his prophets; and becauſe their fathers had not lived righteouſly, he had diſperſed them over all the world. III. He tells them, that the jealouſy of the Lord, and the love he bore his people, would induce him to call them back, and to bleſs them, provided that, for the future, they would ſet themſelves to do that which was right. IV. The prophet directly anſwers their queſtion, and declares, that the four faſts, which had till then been kept in memory of the ſiege of *Jeruſalem*, the taking of that city, the deſtruction of the temple, and the murder of *Gedaliah*, ſhould be changed into days of joy, and that even ſeveral nations ſhould join themſelves with them to worſhip the true God.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THESE two chapters teach us, that faſting and prayer cannot pleaſe God, unleſs they be attended with reformation, and that without this diſpoſition, he has no regard to the worſhip we pay him. II. The example of the *Jews*, who were diſperſed among the nations for not walking uprightly, and for deſpiſing the threats and remonſtrances of the prophets, ſhews us, that God never threatens in vain, and that he puniſhes ſeverely the contempt of his word, and obſtinately perſiſting in ſin. III. In the promiſes made by *Zechariah* to the *Jews*, and the change made in their faſting days, we ſee that God loves his church, and that after he has chaſtened it, his power brings peace, and cauſes joy to ſucceed afflictions. IV. We ſhould carefully attend to what God by his prophet ſays to the *Jews*: *Theſe are the things that ye ſhall do: Speak ye every man the truth to his neighbour; execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates; and let none of you imagine evil in your hearts againſt his neighbour, and love no falſe oath: for all theſe are things that I hate, ſaith the Lord.* Theſe noble expreſſions teach us, that the ſureſt, and indeed the only way to render ourſelves acceptable to God, is to live in innocence, juſtice, charity, and holineſs. Laſtly, We have in the laſt words of the eighth chapter a prophecy, that ſeveral nations would one day join with the *Jews* in worſhipping the true God; which came to paſs firſt, when after the captivity a great number of idolators embraced the *Jewiſh* Religion, and afterwards, when the heathen were converted to the Chriſtian Religion.

CHAP. IX.

THE prophet foretels, that the *Syrians*, the *Tyrians*, the *Sidonians*, the *Philiſtines*, and the other enemies of his people, ſhould be deſtroyed. II. He comforts *Jeruſalem* with the promiſe of the coming of her king;

king; he proclaims deliverance to the captive *Jews*, and every bleſſing.

REFLECTIONS.

I. GOD executed his threatenings againſt the nations mentioned in this chapter, by means of *Alexander* the Great, who ſubdued them, as well as by the *Jews*, who conquered ſeveral cities in *Syria*, *Edom*, and the country of the *Philiſtines*, as we learn from *Joſephus*, and the hiſtory of the *Maccabees*; and who gained great advantages over *Antiochus Epiphanes*, king of *Syria*. II. *Zechariah* foretels likewiſe, that among thoſe nations, God would bring many perſons to the knowledge of himſelf; which came to paſs, when ſeveral heathens in thoſe countries embraced the *Jewiſh* Religion. III. We have here an expreſs prophecy, foretelling, that God would ſend to *Jeruſalem* a king and mighty deliverer; that this king ſhould appear in a mean and abject condition; that he ſhould come riding upon an aſs; but that nevertheleſs, he ſhould give ſignal proofs of his infinite power. This prophecy was accompliſhed, when *Jeſus Chriſt* made his royal entry into *Jeruſalem*, ſix days before his death, riding upon an aſs, and followed by a great multitude of people; and when after his death and reſurrection, he eſtabliſhed his kingdom throughout the world. This is one of the characters by which we diſcover that *Jeſus Chriſt* is the Meſſiah promiſed by the prophets; and theſe words of *Zechariah*, *Rejoice, O daughter of Zion; behold thy king cometh unto thee;* engage us to ſhare in that joy, which the coming of the Redeemer was to occaſion to the church, and to ſubmit to him as our great and good king, who reigns over us only to make us happy.

CHAP. X.

ZECHARIAH, after he had promiſed the *Jews*, at the end of the former chapter, that God would ſend them plenty, and bleſſings of every kind, exhorts them

them to apply to God, and not to idols, to obtain them, as they had done before, when they were ſeduced by their rulers and by falſe prophets, which had provoked God's wrath againſt them. He renews his promiſes that God, who was the ſupport of the *Jews*, would gather them again from the countries where ſeveral of them were ſtill diſperſed, and that he would completely humble the power and pride of the *Aſſyrians*, *Egyptians*, and the other enemies of his people.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter engages us to conſider, I. That ſince God is the author of all bleſſings, temporal as well as ſpiritual, from him alone we ought to expect them; and that in order to obtain them, we muſt devoutly aſk, and with fidelity ſerve him. II. That all the predictions of *Zechariah*, and the other prophets, concerning the return of the *Jews*, and the deſtruction of the nations that made war againſt them, were fulfilled; and therefore we have no reaſon to doubt but thoſe holy men were inſpired by God, and that the doctrine contained in their writings ſhould be received as the word of God himſelf.

CHAP. XI.

THIS chapter deſcribes in general the judgments of God on the people of *Iſrael*. Theſe he repreſents, by ſaying that he had in his hand two ſtaves, that is, ſhepherds crooks; that one of them was called beauty; which denoted the covenant that the *Jews* had made with God: and the other was called bands, which implied the union of the two people of *Iſrael* and *Judah*. He ſays, that theſe two ſtaves were broken, to ſignify, that God would no longer feed or govern the *Jews*, but that he would ſcatter them over all the world. The prophet adds, that three ſhepherds, or three leaders, were cut off in one month; the meaning of which may be, that the principal orders of the *Jewiſh* leaders

leaders ſhould be aboliſhed in a ſhort time. We have here alſo the prophecy of our Saviour's being betrayed for thirty pieces of ſilver.

REFLECTIONS.

ON this chapter let us make theſe two reflections: I. That as the covenant God had made with the *Jews*, did not hinder him from caſting them off and forſaking them, becauſe they had broken it; ſo our covenant with God will not ſkreen us from his wrath, if we break it, and prove unfaithful. II. The other reflection relates to theſe words: *They weighed for my price thirty pieces of ſilver; and the Lord ſaid unto me, Caſt it unto the potter.* The Evangeliſts obſerve, that this prophecy was fulfilled, when *Judas* received of the *Jews* thirty pieces of ſilver to betray our Lord, and when that money which *Judas* caſt into the temple, was applied by the prieſts in the purchaſe of the potter's field. This prediction ſhews, that all which befel *Jeſus Chriſt* was ſo directed by Providence, and had been long before ſignified by the prophets, that by theſe ſeveral characters he might be known to be the Meſſiah.

CHAP. XII.

THIS chapter contains promiſes in behalf of *Jeruſalem;* the prophet likewiſe foretels, that the *Jews* ſhould be aſſaulted, but that God would confound their enemies.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE truth of the promiſes here made to the *Jews*, appeared in the divine protection of that people after their return from the captivity; and chiefly, in the glorious deliverance which God vouchſafed them by the *Maccabees.* II. We muſt remember that theſe words, *They ſhall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they ſhall mourn for him*, relate to our Lord *Jeſus Chriſt.* St. *John* quotes them, to repreſent the great-

neſs of the crime the *Jews* had committed in crucifying him; the ſeverity of the puniſhments they drew upon themſelves by that means; and the terror that ſhall fall upon the wicked, when our Lord ſhall come at the laſt day to judge the world.

CHAP. XIII.

I. THE prophet foretels that there ſhould be a ſpring and fountain open for the *Jews*, that idolatry ſhould be baniſhed from the midſt of them, and that falſe prophets ſhould no more be ſuffered amongſt them, but ſhould be rejected even by their neareſt relations. II. He foretels, that God would ſmite the ſhepherd, and that the ſheep of the flock ſhould be ſcattered; that two parts of the people ſhould be cut off, but that a third ſhould be preſerved and dedicated to the ſervice of God.

REFLECTIONS.

WHAT we read in this chapter, relates to the ſtate the *Jews* were to be in after their return from the captivity. *Zechariah* ſays, that God would pour upon them his grace; that he would cleanſe them from their ſins; that they would not any more fall into idolatry, nor hearken to falſe prophets perſuading them to worſhip idols; that, however, that people, and their rulers, ſhould be ſmitten, and expoſed to great calamities; but that there ſhould be in thoſe times a great number of *Jews*, who being purified by affliction, would ſerve God faithfully and zealouſly. All theſe things befel the *Jews*, between their return from *Babylon* and the coming of *Jeſus Chriſt;* and particularly, at the time of the perſecution of *Antiochus*. In a more perfect ſenſe, this prophecy ſets before us the graces which God has conferred on his church under the Goſpel, waſhing away the ſins of men by the blood of his Son, and recovering them from idolatry and corruption, that they might become the people of God, and ſerve him with purity.

CHAP.

CHAP. XIV.

ZECHARIAH foretels, that *Jeruſalem* ſhould be attacked by powerful enemies; but that God would ſave a remnant of his people, and exalt them to great glory; that the grace of God ſhould from *Jeruſalem* ſpread over other nations; that ſtrange nations ſhould worſhip God, and ſubmit to his government; and that the enemies of the church, and thoſe who refuſed to give glory to God, ſhould be overwhelmed with his judgments.

REFLECTIONS.

WE are to ſeek for the accompliſhment of the promiſes God here makes in favour of *Jeruſalem* and his people, firſt, in the ſtate of the *Jews*, after their return from *Babylon*, in their wars with their enemies, and in the ſignal deliverances God granted them upon ſeveral occaſions, eſpecially when they were perſecuted by *Antiochus*. Theſe advantages raiſed that nation to very great glory, and engaged thoſe *Jews*, who were diſperſed in *Egypt*, and other countries, to come to *Jeruſalem* to worſhip the God of their fathers, and attend at the ſolemn faſts. But it is to be conſidered, that the *Jews* did not long continue in that happy condition, not long enough to anſwer to the glorious promiſes God had made them; that *Jeruſalem* was afterwards intirely deſtroyed: and that while it did ſubſiſt, it could not be ſaid that God reigned, as *Zechariah* here foretels. Wherefore this prophecy ought to be underſtood in a ſpiritual and more perfect ſenſe, as it relates to the Chriſtian church, of which *Jeſus Chriſt* is the king and protector; and in which all nations are gathered together to worſhip God in ſpirit and in truth.

The end of the Book of the Prophet ZECHARIAH.

THE

BOOK

OF THE PROPHET

MALACHI.

ARGUMENT.

Malachi, *the laſt of the prophets, does two things in his prophecy.* I. *He exhorts the Jews to reform the diſorders that were committed among them, eſpecially in the divine ſervice, and to be converted.* II. *He foretels the eſtabliſhment of the goſpel worſhip; the coming of* John *the Baptiſt, and of Jeſus Chriſt; and the laſt ruin of the Jews.*

I. IN this chapter God reproaches the *Jews*, that though he had loved and choſen them for his people, before the poſterity of *Eſau*, yet they had been ungrateful for his favours. II. He reproves the prieſts and the people for offering to him unclean things, and beaſts that had blemiſhes, which was againſt the law; and he foretels, that the time drew near when men ſhould offer every where to God a pure ſervice, and ſacrifices that ſhould be acceptable to him.

REFLEC-

REFLECTIONS *after reading the chapter.*

I. GOD, to convince the *Jews* that he had loved them in a very particular manner, tells them at the beginning of this prophecy, that he had loved *Jacob*, and hated *Eſau*; the meaning of which is, that he had choſen *Jacob* preferably to *Eſau* his brother, to be admitted into covenant with him; and that he had not reſtored the *Edomites*, and deſcendants of *Eſau*, after their deſtruction, as he had reſtored the *Jews*, the poſterity of *Jacob*, by bringing them again to *Jeruſalem*. St. *Paul* quotes this paſſage of *Malachi*, in the ninth chapter of the Epiſtle to the *Romans*, to ſhew, that God may chooſe whom he pleaſes, and grant them extraordinary favours, which he vouchſafes not to others; and that if we are ſo happy as to be the people of God, we owe it wholly to his goodneſs, and to the free and gracious choice he has been pleaſed to make of us. II. We here ſee that the *Jews*, notwithſtanding the love which God had expreſſed towards them, did not honour him as they ought. This God complains of, when he ſays, *a ſon honoureth his father, and a ſervant his maſter; if then I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a maſter, where is my fear?* Theſe words teach us, that they, who return the divine love only with diſobedience, are guilty of foul ingratitude; and that it is in vain to call God our Father and our Lord, if we do not render him the fear and honour which are due to him. III. Thoſe who are called to the holy miniſtry, ought to diſcharge it in ſuch a manner, that God may not have occaſion to reproach them, as he did the *Jewiſh* prieſts, with diſhonouring his name, and rendering his ſervice contemptible. IV. The prophet complains, that the *Jews*, out of a principle of covetouſneſs, brought into the temple unſuitable offerings, and preſented only things of the ſmalleſt value; which God looked upon as ſacrilege and impiety. This ſhould make us ſhun covetouſneſs, and excite us to act ſincerely, and after the

the moſt perfect manner, in all things that concern the glory of God and his ſervice. Laſtly, *Malachi* foretels, that the name of God ſhould be great among all nations, and that in all places incenſe and pure oblations ſhould be offered to his name. This prophecy ſignified, that the name of God would be made known throughout the world, by the preaching of the Goſpel; and is to be underſtood of the worſhip that would be paid among all nations, after the manifeſtation of the Meſſiah. This engages us to diſcharge theſe juſt duties, by offering always to God ſuch ſpiritual ſacrifices as he will accept through *Jeſus Chriſt* our Lord.

CHAP. II.

THIS chapter conſiſts of two parts: I. God reproves the negligence and impiety of the prieſts, who, inſtead of having at heart the glory of God, and faithfully inſtructing the *Jews*, as their function obliged them, diſhonoured their miniſtry, rendered the divine ſervice contemptible, and cauſed the people to ſin; for which he threatens them with his curſes. II. God complains, that the *Jews* had married idolatrous women, contrary to the law; and that they violated the ſacred laws of marriage, by divorces, and by unlawful marriages.

REFLECTIONS.

THE firſt part of this chapter directly relates to the miniſters of religion, teaching them that they are appointed to procure the glory of God, to be the guides of the people, and to inſtruct them faithfully, both by their doctrine and example; that when they are wanting in their duty, religion is deſpiſed, divine ſervice is profaned, the people corrupted, and they themſelves fall into contempt, and become the objects of the curſe of God. The paſtors and governors of the church, ought to have theſe reflections continually before their eyes. The ſecond part of this chapter contains very important directions about marriage. Here we ſee that

that God is offended when the ſacred laws of marriage are broken, either by divorces, or by polygamy, or in any other manner whatever, as well as when we marry perſons guilty of idolatry. *Malachi* ſhews, that all theſe diſorders are contrary to the firſt inſtitution of marriage, ſince God created but one man and one woman at the beginning; and this point *Jeſus Chriſt* ſettles ſtill more plainly in the Goſpel, where he proves, by the firſt inſtitution made by God after the creation, that marriage is a holy ſtate, and an indiſſoluble bond, which equally binds the wife and the huſband. Therefore this ſtate ought to be reſpected, and preſerved in its purity among Chriſtians.

CHAP. III.

HERE are three things to be obſerved: I. The prophet foretels, that God would ſoon ſend *John* the Baptiſt, and that then the Meſſiah ſhould come to purify his church, by eſtabliſhing the true ſervice of God, and by puniſhing the wicked. II. He ſeverely rebukes the impiety of the *Jews*, and the ſacrilege they committed in their tithes and offerings. III. He refutes the blaſphemies of thoſe profane perſons, who gave out that men ſerve God in vain; and he ſays, that God never fails to reward thoſe that fear him, and to diſtinguiſh them from the ungodly.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THIS prophecy expreſsly ſhews, that God was ſhortly to ſend a prophet, who is here called the Angel, or Meſſenger of the Lord; after which the Lord, whom the *Jews* expected, ſhould enter into his temple. Our Lord *Jeſus Chriſt* explains this prophecy in the eleventh chapter of St. *Matthew*, and declares, that *John* Baptiſt is that meſſenger who was to come. It is evident this prediction has been accompliſhed, ſince it foretold, that the Meſſiah ſhould come while the temple at *Jeruſalem* was ſtanding; for that temple being deſtroyed, there is no ambiguity in this prophecy,

and

and we cannot doubt but that *Jeſus* is the Meſſiah promiſed to the *Jews*. II. This prophecy ſhews, that the deſign of the coming of *Jeſus Chriſt* was to ſanctify his church, and to make believers ſo many Prieſts and Levites; that is, perſons dedicated to the ſervice of God. This is a powerful motive to Chriſtians to behave agreeably to their holy calling, by devoting themſelves to God, and by the purity of their lives. III. *Malachi*'s reproach of the *Jews* for their ſins, and particularly for their ſacrilege, and their contempt of the divine ſervice, is an argument to prove, that God would have men reſpect every thing that belongs to religion, and in particular, that it is a great ſin to apply to any other purpoſe things that are devoted to holy uſes. IV. Let us learn likewiſe from hence, to deteſt prophane ſpeeches and ſentiments; and, above all, to abhor the impiety of thoſe who affirm, that it is in vain to fear God and to keep his commandments. The Lord here very expreſsly declares, that he knows thoſe that fear him and reverence his name; that he will remember them and their pious behaviour, and will always make a juſt difference between the righteous and the wicked.

CHAP. IV.

MALACHI foretels the coming of the day of God's vengeance, and the deſtruction of the ungodly, under the emblem of fire, which conſumes all things: and ſays, it would be preceded by the coming of the Meſſiah, whom he calls the Sun of Righteouſneſs, and by the coming of *John* Baptiſt, to whom he gives the name of *Elijah*, and whoſe office and miniſtry he deſcribes.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS laſt chapter of *Malachi* takes notice of three conſiderable events. The firſt is the vengeance which God purpoſed to exerciſe againſt the ungodly. This prophecy expreſſes what befel the unbelieving *Jews* ſoon

ſoon after the coming of *Jeſus Chriſt*, when they were deſtroyed with their city and temple. The ſecond is, the manifeſtation of the Meſſiah, who is here called the Sun of Righteouſneſs, with healing on his wings. The third is the coming of *John* Baptiſt, to whom *Malachi* gives the name of *Elijah* the prophet, becauſe he was to reſemble *Elijah* in his manner of living, in his zeal, and in the nature of his office. We find in the Goſpel, that this is the true ſenſe of this prophecy, our Lord having expreſsly told us, that *John* Baptiſt was the *Elijah* that was to come. Theſe ſeveral predictions are ſo many proofs which confirm the divine authority of the holy Scriptures, the truth of the Chriſtian religion, the certainty of the promiſes and threatenings of the Goſpel, and the neceſſity of practiſing all that is therein commanded. This is alſo the deſign of all the prophecies, and of all the Books of the Old Teſtament, and the uſe to which they ought to be applied.

The end of the Canonical Books of the Old Teſtament.

THE

THE

ARGUMENTS

OF THE

BOOKS AND CHAPTERS

OF THE

NEW TESTAMENT,

WITH PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS.

TO HER

ROYAL HIGHNESS

THE

PRINCESS ANNE, &c.

MADAM,

THE Treatiſe which I preſume to lay at the feet of your Royal Highneſs, conſiſts of an enumeration of the Arguments of the Books and Chapters in the NEW TESTAMENT, accompanied with theological and moral Reflections upon all of them. It was compiled by that eminent Divine, Mr. *Oſtervald*, at the requeſt of a SOCIETY, that has diſtinguiſhed itſelf by the moſt worthy of all purpoſes, the endeavour of PROMOTING CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE. The work could hardly have a greater recommendation than that of ſuch an Aſſembly; but I can name a ſtill higher advantage to it, the approbation of your illuſtrious Mother.

THAT

THAT it may be useful to your Highness and your Sisters, by forwarding you in the imitation of her Christian and Royal virtues and accomplishments, is the most sincere and constant prayer of,

MADAM,

YOUR ROYAL HIGNESS'S

MOST HUMBLE, AND

MOST OBEDIENT SERVANT,

JOHN CHAMBERLAYNE.

THE

GOSPEL

ACCORDING TO

ST. MATTHEW.

ARGUMENT.

We have in the Goſpels the hiſtory of our Lord's life, death, and reſurrection, and his aſcenſion into heaven. It is the duty of every Chriſtian to read and hear theſe divine Books with ſerious attention and profound reverence; to meditate on them day and night; and to make a right uſe of the inſtructions contained in them.—The firſt of the Four Goſpels, which is that of the apoſtle St. Matthew, *is thought to have been written about eight years after our Lord's aſcenſion.*

CHAP. I.

THIS chapter contains, I. The genealogy of *Jeſus Chriſt*, from *Abraham* to *Joſeph*, the huſband of the Bleſſed Virgin. II. A ſhort relation of the conception and birth of our Lord.

REFLECTIONS *after reading the chapter.*

THE genealogy of *Jeſus Chriſt*, which is recited in the firſt chapter of St. *Matthew*, ſhews that he is deſcended from the patriarch *Abraham* and from king *David*, as was foretold by the prophets. And the hiſtory

hiſtory of his conception and birth teaches us, that he was born of the virgin *Mary*, after a wonderful manner, by the operation of the Holy Ghoſt, according to the prediction of the prophet *Iſaiah*. Both our Lord's genealogy, and the manner of his conception and birth, prove him to be the Meſſiah whom God had promiſed to ſend; and that in him the promiſes of God, and the prophecies of the Old Teſtament, had their accompliſhment: This engages us to receive him as our Saviour, to ſubmit to his doctrine, and to render thanks to God for giving us his only Son for our Redeemer, *who was made of the ſeed of David according to the fleſh*, Rom. i. 3. and *who is over all, God bleſſed for ever. Amen.* Rom. ix. 5.

CHAP. II.

THIS chapter contains four things: I. The arrival of the Magi that came to worſhip *Jeſus* after his birth. Theſe Magi were men of great learning and high rank, who came from *Arabia*, or ſome other country lying to the eaſt of *Judea*. II. The retreat of *Joſeph* and *Mary*, who fled into *Egypt* with the child *Jeſus*, to avoid the rage of *Herod*. III. The ſlaughter of the children of *Bethlehem*, whom *Herod* cauſed to be murdered, thinking to deſtroy our Lord among them. IV. The return of *Joſeph* and *Mary* to *Judea*, after the death of *Herod*.

REFLECTIONS.

THESE are the obſervations that may be made upon this chapter: I. The firſt is, that the wiſe men came to worſhip *Jeſus* after his birth, being guided by a miraculous ſtar, which God cauſed to appear; to which, no doubt, was added ſome kind of revelation from heaven: God was pleaſed thereby to render that birth illuſtrious, and to ſhew the dignity of the perſon of our Lord, and inform the *Jews*, that the Meſſiah, whom they expected, was going to make his appearance; and it likewiſe denoted, that the Gentiles would ſoon be admitted

admitted into covenant with God. II. *Herod*'s conſulting the chief prieſts and ſcribes, and the anſwer they made, prove, that the Meſſiah was expected at that time; and that *Bethlehem*, it was thought, would be the place of his birth. III. The homage which theſe wiſe men of the eaſt paid to the child *Jeſus*, falling down before him, and preſenting unto him their gift, ſhould excite us, who know he is our God and our Saviour, to worſhip him, love and praiſe him, and to devote to him all that is in our power. IV. We ſee, in the behaviour of *Herod* towards the wiſe men, and in the maſſacre which he made of the children of *Bethlehem*, the craft and cruelty of that prince, who neglected no poſſible means to deſtroy the child *Jeſus*: And thus was our Lord expoſed, even from his birth, to great perils; which ſhewed, from the very firſt, that his *kingdom was not of this world*, and that he was born to ſuffer. We may likewiſe take notice, that God, by the warning which he gave to the wiſe men, and afterwards to *Joſeph*, defeated *Herod*'s deſigns, and that all the meaſures which that unjuſt and cruel prince had taken to deſtroy *Jeſus*, as effectual as he thought them, and as they appeared to be, could not procure our Lord's death, nor prevent his returning into *Judea*, where he afterwards exerciſed his miniſtry. All theſe events may convince us, that Providence did direct, in a particular manner, all that happened to *Jeſus Chriſt*; and that the utmoſt endeavours of men can never hinder the execution of what God has purpoſed, nor hurt thoſe whom he protects.

CHAP. III.

THIS chapter conſiſts of two parts: I. In the firſt, mention is made of the preaching and miniſtry of *John* the Baptiſt; and, II. In the ſecond, the Evangeliſt relates the hiſtory of the baptiſm of our Lord.

REFLECTIONS.

LET us obſerve in general, upon the firſt part of this chapter, that before the appearance of *Jeſus Chriſt*, *John* the Baptiſt, as the prophets had foretold, was ſent from God to declare to the *Jews* the coming of the Meſſiah, and to exhort them to repentance; by which God was pleaſed to teach them, that the time for the manifeſtation of the Meſſiah's kingdom was come; but that it would be a ſpiritual and heavenly, not a temporal or worldly kingdom, as they imagined. With the ſame view, *John* the Baptiſt aſſured the *Jews*, that their deſcending from the patriarch *Abraham* was a privilege which would by no means ſecure them from the divine vengeance that was ready to fall upon that nation becauſe of their unbelief; and that God would call other nations in their ſtead, to become, by faith, children of *Abraham*. In ſhort, he gave them to underſtand, that *Jeſus* was going to appear, and that it was he who ſhould execute the judgments of God upon the impenitent and unbelieving, and glorioufly reward the righteous. Thus God, in his wiſdom, was willing to prepare the *Jews* for receiving *Jeſus Chriſt*, and remove thoſe prejudices concerning the kingdom of the Meſſiah, which might have hindered their believing in him. From the preaching of *John* the Baptiſt we may learn, that repentance and holineſs of life is a qualification, without which no one can be the diſciple of *Jeſus Chriſt*, nor enter into the kingdom of God. It likewiſe informs us, that as the unbelieving *Jews* vainly boaſted that they were the children of *Abraham*, it is no advantage to hypocrites to be externally in covenant with God: that *Jeſus Chriſt* knows them, and that he will one day cleanſe his church, by caſting the wicked into everlaſting fire, and by receiving the true believers into his kingdom. As to the baptiſm of our Lord, it muſt be obſerved, that when he was entering upon the diſcharge of his office, he was baptized by St. *John*, his forerunner; that upon this occaſion the Holy Ghoſt deſcended

upon

upon him in a viſible manner, and that God cauſed a voice to be heard from heaven, whereby he declared that *Jeſus* was his beloved Son. God was pleaſed that all theſe things ſhould happen, to convince *John* the Baptiſt, and all the people, that *Jeſus* was the promiſed Meſſiah. Thus the hiſtory of his baptiſm obliges us to conſider him as the Son of God, and to pay him unreſerved obedience. It likewiſe engages us to reverence the baptiſm we have received, and by which we have been dedicated to God, made his children, and heirs of the kingdon of heaven.

CHAP. IV.

ST. *Matthew* here relates, I. The hiſtory of the temptation of *Jeſus Chriſt*. II. The manner in which he began to exerciſe his miniſtry in *Galilee*, by declaring that the kingdom of God was come, by chuſing apoſtles, and by working miracles.

REFLECTIONS.

IT may be obſerved in general upon the hiſtory of the temptation, that the deſign of the devil in tempting our Lord was to try whether *Jeſus* was the Son of God; and that it pleaſed God to ſuffer this temptation, that the devil, convinced of that truth, might reverence the power of *Jeſus Chriſt*; and that it might appear, that our Lord was come into the world to deſtroy the kingdom of Satan. Let it alſo be conſidered, that if *Jeſus Chriſt* himſelf was tempted, we ſhould not be ſurprized if we alſo are expoſed to varions temptations; and that we ought, in imitation of our Lord, to reſiſt temptation, and particularly ſuch as might lead us into diſtruſt, or preſumption, or make us grow fond of the honours or riches of this world; or laſtly, ſuch as may any way tend to draw us off from the true ſervice of God, and from that allegiance we owe him. And the method which *Chriſt* made uſe of to repel the temptations of Satan, by quoting the Holy Scriptures, ſhews us, that it is by the word of God that we

may defeat temptations, and quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. Three things are to be obſerved in the latter part of this chapter: Firſt, that *Jeſus Chriſt* began to exerciſe his miniſtry in *Galilee*, by preaching repentance, as *John* Baptiſt had done. This ſhould convince us more and more, that holineſs of life is the great end of the Goſpel which *Chriſt* preached, and what he principally requires of his diſciples. II. Our Lord's making choice of fiſhermen for his apoſtles proves, that the wonderful ſucceſs of their preaching afterwards did not proceed from themſelves, but ought wholly to be aſcribed to God, who endowed them with his gifts. Laſtly, the wonderful cures by which *Jeſus* made himſelf known at firſt, tended to ſhew, that he was ſent from God, that his doctrine was from above, and that he came into the world only for the good and ſalvation of mankind.

CHAP. V. 1—20.

THIS chapter, together with the two following, contains *Chriſt*'s ſermon upon the mount. In the beginning of this ſermon our Lord does two things: I. He teaches us what thoſe diſpoſitions are without which we cannot be truly happy. II. What obligation his diſciples are under to live a ſtrictly holy life.

REFLECTIONS.

OUR Lord's deſign in this diſcourſe, contained in the fifth, ſixth, and ſeventh chapters of St. *Matthew*, in general is to inſtruct his diſciples in the chief duties of the chriſtian life; for which reaſon we ought to read and hear it with great attention, and to regulate our behaviour by the divine precepts we find in it. Two things are to be conſidered in the firſt part of this chapter: I. The beatitudes teach us wherein the true happineſs of man conſiſts, and how to diſtinguiſh the true diſciples of *Chriſt*, whoſe character it is not to ſet their hearts upon the riches, pleaſures, or honours of this world, but to be unconcerned about earthly things;

to

to live in meekneſs, humility, holineſs, and peace; to deſire ardently, and, above all things, to be holy and to pleaſe God, and even joyfully to undergo perſecution for the ſake of the Goſpel. II. *Jeſus Chriſt* has taught us, that his diſciples are the ſalt of the earth and the light of the world: that is, that they ought to diſtinguiſh themſelves from other men by the purity of their lives, and endeavour to enlighten and edify them by their inſtructions and good examples. He has expreſsly declared, that he was ſo far from coming into the world to diſpenſe with the obſervation of the law of God, that on the contrary, he came to lay men under ſtill greater obligations to fulfil it in the moſt perfect manner. Laſtly, He declares he will not admit into his kingdom any who had not attained to a greater perfection in righteouſneſs and holineſs than that of the Scribes and Phariſees, who were eſteemed among the *Jews* men of the greateſt knowledge and holineſs. All theſe precepts of our Lord ſhould make us ſenſible of the indiſpenſible obligation we lie under to ſtudy to lead a holy life, and to aſpire after the higheſt degree of perfection we can poſſibly attain.

CHAP. V. 21—48.

JESUS CHRIST, to ſhew that his diſciples are called to great holineſs, teaches them, that it is not ſufficient to abſtain from notorious crimes, and ſuch as are expreſsly condemned in the law of God, but alſo, that thoſe ſins which appear leſs conſiderable are to be avoided, and, above all, the motions of the heart to be regulated. He inſtances in the commandments concerning murder, adultery, oaths, revenge, and the love of our neighbours. He corrects the falſe interpretations which the *Jews* put upon thoſe commandments, and gives us the true ſenſe and meaning of them.

REFLECTIONS.

THE explanation which our Lord gives of the chief commandments of the law, teaches us, that God prohibits

hibits and puniſhes not only the great and crying ſins mentioned in the Decalogue, but that he likewiſe condemns and puniſhes us for evil thoughts and evil deſires, which the *Jewiſh* doctors conſidered only as light faults. Beſides this general and very important leſſon, *Chriſt* inſtructs us in theſe four particular duties: I. That anger, and all terms of reproach and contempt, which proceed from hatred of our neighbour, ſubject us to condemnation, as well as murder; that, far from hating any one, we ought to labour to have peace with all men; and that we ſhould not preſent ourſelves before God, and offer him our prayers, without doing all that lies in our power to be reconciled to thoſe that have any thing againſt us. II. The ſecond duty relates to purity and chaſtity: Our Lord teaches us, that impure deſires render us guilty before God, as well as adultery and other acts of uncleanneſs; that in order to be chaſte, we muſt watch over ourſelves, mortify our ſenſes, pluck out an eye, cut off a hand or foot; that is, mortify ourſelves and renounce every thing though moſt dear and agreeable to us, if it be an occaſion of falling. He likewiſe teaches us, that the marriage engagement cannot be diſſolved but by adultery, which ſhews what obligation Chriſtians are under to chaſtity. III. The third inſtruction relates to ſwearing: The doctrine of the Son of God upon this point is, that it is not ſufficient to avoid perjury, which is a very great crime, but that we ought likewiſe to be ſcrupulous in breaking oaths, though not made by the name of God, and entirely to abſtain from vain and raſh oaths, of what kind ſoever they be, ſince they are forbid by the law of *Jeſus Chriſt*, and contrary to that reverence that is due to the Divinity. IV. The fourth duty is that of charity, and the love of our neighbour: What *Chriſt* commands upon that head is, to abſtain from revenge, to bear injuries rather than to return evil for evil; to give up our right for peace ſake, and to avoid diſputes; to love all men, even thoſe that hate us, therein imitating our heavenly Father, who does good to all, even to the wicked and ungrateful;

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This is the law of the Goſpel, and of true charity, and in the practice of all theſe duties, we ſhall find our perfection and glory.

CHAP. VI.

OUR Lord inſtructs his diſciples in the duties of alms, prayer, and faſting; ſhews them how to diſcharge thoſe religious acts, and exhorts them, above all, to avoid hypocriſy and oſtentation. II. He forbids them to take pains to heap up worldly riches, or to be ſolicitous for the good things of this life; exhorts them to depend upon Providence, and before all things to ſeek the kingdom of God, and his righteouſneſs.

REFLECTIONS.

IN this chapter the Saviour of the world teaches us, I. That alms, prayer, and faſting, are three very important duties of religion; and as to faſting, in particular, it evidently appears, that ſince *Chriſt* has preſcribed rules for the manner of faſting, as well as for prayer and alms, his deſign was, that his diſciples ſhould faſt; private faſts, which are here meant, being very uſeful to mortify the fleſh, and to diſpoſe us for humiliation and prayer; and having been likewiſe practiſed by the apoſtles, and ſince their time by Chriſtians in general throughout the world. II. Our Saviour commands us carefully to avoid hypocriſy and vain-glory in giving alms, in prayer, and faſting; and to diſcharge theſe duties with ſincerity and humility, remembering that we are in the preſence of God, to whom all the ſecrets of our hearts are expoſed, and that hypocrites have no reward to expect from him. III. Since the Lord's Prayer was compoſed by *Jeſus Chriſt* himſelf, and comprehends all that is neceſſary for the glory of God and our own happineſs, the uſe we are to make of it is, To offer it up to God with the greateſt reverence, fervency and devotion; and in the ſecond place, to adapt, not only our prayers, but likewiſe our thoughts and behaviour to that excellent pat-

tern which *Chriſt* has left us. IV. Our Lord has declared moſt expreſsly, that we muſt not expect God ſhould hear and pardon us, if we do not likewiſe pardon all thoſe that have offended us, ; we ought therefore to examine ourſelves very ſtrictly on this head, before we offer up our prayers to God. V. The fifth leſſon which we learn from this chapter is, not eagerly to purſue the treaſures of this world, which are vain and uncertain, and which many accidents may deprive us of; but rather to labour after the heavenly treaſure, which is in its own nature moſt excellent, and which nothing can take from us. To this end he repreſents the danger of loving riches, becauſe ſuch love blinds us, and engages our affections to the earth, and makes it impoſſible to lift up our hearts to God, to love and ſerve him, whilſt the love of this world has poſſeſſion of our hearts. VI. Our Lord does not only forbid us to love riches, but even commands us not to be uneaſy, or too ſolicitous even for the neceſſaries of life, exhorting us to truſt in the providence of God, who, as he takes care for birds and other creatures, will much more provide for the wants of his own children, who are of a more excellent nature, and deſigned for immortality.

Our Saviour condemns thoſe worldly cares which are exceſſive, and attended with uneaſineſs and diſtruſt, becauſe ſuch cares are unprofitable, and unworthy of Chriſtians. Laſtly, He exhorts us to endeavour, above all things, to pleaſe God, and to attain the kingdom of heaven; promiſing us, that if we do ſo, God will grant us all things neceſſary for the ſupport of the body. Let us imprint in our minds theſe divine leſſons; let them always be preſent to us in the midſt of our worldly concerns, to ſecure us from too ſtrict an union with them, and engage us chiefly to ſeek after that never-failing treaſure which is reſerved in heaven for us.

CHAP.

CHAP. VII.

OUR Lord diſcourſes here of raſh judgment; of prudence in propoſing truth; of prayer and its efficacy; he preſcribes rules of juſtice and charity; exhorts us to enter in at the ſtrait gate, and to avoid falſe teachers. He declares, that all who call him Lord will not enter into the kingdom of heaven; and ſhews by a parable, that it is in vain to hear his word, if we do not practiſe it.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter contains ſeveral weighty inſtructions. I. The firſt is, not to judge raſhly of our neighbour, nor to blame him with too great ſeverity; to acknowledge our own faults, and amend them, rather than pry too curiouſly into and reprove the faults of other men. II. The ſecond is, not to give that which is holy unto dogs: This is a prudential advice, the meaning of which is, That when we have to do with carnal and profane men, who proudly and contemptuouſly reject the doctrine of the Goſpel, we ought not to offer it to them, for fear of expoſing religion to their hatred and contempt. III. Our Lord exhorts us to pray to God with confidence, aſſuring us, that prayer is of very great efficacy, provided it be attended with zeal and perſeverance, and that we aſk of God thoſe things that are really good; this he ſhews by the compariſon between God and our natural parents, who never deny their children the things that are neceſſary for them. IV. He gives us here a rule of juſtice and charity, which is, to do to others as we would have them do to us; this moſt perfect, and at the ſame time moſt plain and eaſy rule, we ought always to have before our eyes. V. He exhorts his diſciples to enter in at the ſtrait gate; that is, to follow that faith and piety which leads to ſalvation, though few people walk in that way, and it be contrary to human paſſions and inclinations, and even though

though it ſhould ſometimes expoſe us to perſecution; and he commands us to avoid the paths of error and vice, which ſeem agreeable to fleſh and blood; a way in which many people walk, but which leads to deſtruction. VI. Our Lord bids his diſciples beware of impoſtors and falſe teachers, which would be very numerous afterwards. The rule he gives is, to judge of them by their fruits; that is, by their works and behaviour, and by the natural effects of their doctrine, taking notice whether it tended to the glory of God, and to make mankind better. VII. After that he declares, that all who profeſs his religion, and call him their Lord, ſhall not enter into heaven; that he will receive into it none but ſuch as perform his will; and that many who have known him, and have even wrought miracles in his name, ſhall be ſhut out of his kingdom, becauſe they have not kept his commandments. VIII. Laſtly, He concludes this diſcourſe by the compariſon of a houſe founded upon a rock, with one built upon the ſand; by which he ſhews, that it is in vain to hear his word, if we do not obſerve that which he commands; and that thoſe who fail in this eſſential duty, can never perſevere, nor reſiſt temptation. By this ſimilitude we are taught what uſe to make of the Goſpel, and particularly of the inſtructions contained in this and the two foregoing chapters.

CHAP. VIII. 1—17.

ST. *Matthew* relates ſeveral miracles of *Jeſus Chriſt*. I. The healing of a leper. II. That of the ſervant of a Gentile captain. III. That of St. *Peter*'s mother-in-law, and ſeveral other diſeaſed people.

REFLECTIONS.

AS this chapter begins the hiſtory of our Saviour's miracles, the firſt obſervation we ſhall make relates to thoſe miracles in general; in which we diſcover, I. The infinite power of our Lord, which appeared in his healing all kinds of diſeaſes by his word only. II. His goodneſs

goodneſs and love towards men, thoſe miracles being nothing elſe but acts of beneficence. III. We are to conſider the deſign of theſe miracles, which was to convince men, that *Jeſus* was ſent from God, and to engage them to hear him, and believe in him; for which reaſon the miracles he wrought were commonly for the ſake of ſuch as believed he was able to do them. Beſides theſe general reflections, which ought always to be remembered when we read the Goſpel, it is to be obſerved, that in the cure of the leper our Lord had reſpect to his faith and prayer; whereby we may ſee, that he ſaves and delivers thoſe who have recourſe to him with an humble confidence. Further, *Jeſus Chriſt* ordered the leper to go and ſhew himſelf to the high prieſt, and offer what was commanded by the law, to convince the *Jews* that he was quite cured, and that they might not accuſe him of being an enemy to the law of *Moſes*. The hiſtory of the centurion, who entreated our Lord to heal his ſervant, is particularly remarkable for the profound humility and ſurpriſing faith of that man, who did not think himſelf worthy to receive *Chriſt* into his houſe; and was perſuaded, that without coming to him our Lord needed only to ſay the word, and the ſervant would be healed with as much eaſe as he, being an officer, could command the ſoldiers under him to obey him. Our Lord's great commendation of the faith of that officer, (who was born a heathen,) ſaying that he had not found ſuch great faith even among the *Jews*, obliges us to take great notice of that example, and to imitate the faith and humility of the centurion. *Jeſus* foretold, upon this occaſion, that many ſhould come from the eaſt, and from the weſt, and ſit down in the kingdom of heaven, when the children of the kingdom ſhould be caſt out; which was as much as to ſay, That the Gentiles, from the ſeveral parts of the world, ſhould be admitted into covenant with God, and the *Jews* rejected, as was ſoon after verified by the event. Laſtly, St. *Matthew*'s applying that prophecy of *Iſaiah*, *He has borne our griefs*

griefs and carried our ſorrows, to our Lord, after his healing St. *Peter*'s mother-in-law, and ſeveral others, teaches us what was the end of all theſe miracles; they were deſigned to prove that *Jeſus* was a kind and compaſſionate Saviour, and that he only came into the world to do good to mankind; to deliver them from all their miſeries, and chiefly from their ſins.

CHAP. VIII. 18—34.

THE latter part of this chapter contains three things. I. Our Saviour's reply to one of the Scribes, and to a diſciple that deſired to follow him. II. The ſtilling a tempeſt. III. The cure of two men poſſeſſed with devils.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE anſwer which *Jeſus Chriſt* returned to a Scribe that was deſirous to follow him, tended to make him ſenſible, that he was not to expect worldly advantages in his ſervice; and his bidding one of his diſciples *leave the dead to bury their dead*, ſignified, that he ought to leave the care of temporal things to thoſe that were not enlightened with the Goſpel, and that thoſe whom he called to be his diſciples ſhould follow him without delay, and be ready to forſake every thing, and to renounce the things of this life, even ſuch as are lawful and innocent, when they hinder them from diſcharging the duties of their calling. II. In our Saviour's miracle of laying the ſtorm, we may obſerve, on one hand, his power in calming the wind and the ſea by his word only; and on the other, the weakneſs of the apoſtles, who were afraid of ſinking. This event, which tended to confirm their faith, ought to ſtrengthen ours, and fill us with an entire confidence in the power and goodneſs of *Jeſus Chriſt*. We may be entirely ſecure, even in the midſt of the greateſt dangers, when we are beloved by him, and have him for our protector. III. The hiſtory of thoſe demoniacks whom our Saviour healed, ſhews us, that the

the devil did then exerciſe his power over men, but that *Chriſt* was come to take away that power from him, and to deſtroy his kingdom. As to what happened to the herd of ſwine, which ran headlong into the ſea, after the devils had entered into them by the permiſſion of our Lord, it muſt be conſidered, that he was pleaſed by this loſs to try and puniſh the inhabitants of that country, and to ſhew, that the men whom he had healed were really poſſeſſed; that he had power over devils, and that thoſe evil ſpirits could do nothing without his permiſſion; and the whole may ſerve to convince men of the power of *Jeſus Chriſt*, to inform them of the end of his coming into the world, and fully to perſuade them of the truth of his doctrine.

CHAP. IX.

THIS chapter contains: I. The cure of a man that had the palſy. II. The calling of St. *Matthew* to the office of an apoſtle; and *Chriſt*'s anſwer to thoſe that were offended at his eating with ſinners. III. His reply to the diſciples of *John* the Baptiſt, when they aſked him, why his diſciples did not faſt as well as they? IV. The cure of a woman that had an iſſue of blood. V. The raiſing to life the ruler's daughter. VI. The giving ſight to two blind men, and delivering the dumb man poſſeſſed with a devil. Laſtly, Our Lord's exhortation to his diſciples, to pray that God would ſend men to labour in the converſion of the people.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THERE may be two reflections made upon the healing the paralytic. The firſt, That our Lord had regard to the faith of that man, and of thoſe that preſented him; which ſhews, that it is by faith, and by an humble recourſe to *Jeſus Chriſt*, that we partake of the effects of his grace. The ſecond, That ſince *Jeſus Chriſt* had not only power to heal the ſick, but likewiſe

likewiſe authority to forgive ſin; we ſhould look on him as our judge, and by faith and repentance diſpoſe ourſelves to receive from him remiſſion of our ſins. II. The anſwer our Lord returned to thoſe that found fault at his eating with publicans, and other men of bad life, teaches us, that he came into the world to ſave ſinners, but that the end of his coming was likewiſe to call them to repentance; and therefore without amendment and holineſs of life we cannot be ſaved. III. If *Jeſus Chriſt* did not oblige his diſciples, to regular, ſet faſts, like thoſe of *John*'s diſciples, it was not becauſe his doctrine on this point differed from that of his forerunner, or becauſe he condemned faſting, which he recommended both by example and precept, and by calling them to a life of mortification, not of eaſe and pleaſure: but he acted thus for the ſame reaſon that he himſelf did not lead as retired and auſtere a life as *John* the Baptiſt; that is, becauſe the nature of his miniſtry obliged him to go from place to place, and to converſe with all ſorts of people. However, he declares that his diſciples ſhould afterwards be called, not only to faſting, but to the ſevereſt trials; and that if he did not expoſe them to thoſe ſeverities while he was with them, it was becauſe they were not able to bear them; this he repreſents in the compariſons of the old garment, and old wine veſſels. IV. The healing of a woman that had been diſeaſed with a flux of blood twelve years, ſhews, that our Lord cured the moſt inveterate and incurable diſtempers: but above all, we ought to obſerve the humility and faith of that woman, who, not daring to ſpeak to *Chriſt*, believed that if ſhe could only touch his garment ſhe ſhould be whole, which accordingly came to paſs. This example ſhews us, that our Lord has reſpect to humility and faith, and that the infallible means of obtaining his favour, is to have recourſe to him with profound humility, and an entire confidence. V. The raiſing of the daughter of *Jairus*, proves that *Jeſus Chriſt* had not only power to heal the ſick, but that he could even reſtore life to the dead; which

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ought fully to convince us that he was ſent from God, and confirm us in the belief and expectation of our own reſurrection. VI. It is obſerved at the end of this chapter, that our Saviour ſeeing the people which followed him in great need of inſtruction and good guides, took pity on them, and bid his diſciples *Pray the Lord of the harveſt to ſend labourers into his harveſt.* Theſe words, which expreſs the great love of our Saviour, ſhould inſpire us with the ſame ſentiments of compaſſion and kindneſs to thoſe that wander out of the way; and ſtir us up to beſeech God that he would ſend faithful miniſters, and bleſs their labours in the converſion of men, and eſtabliſhment of his kingdom.

CHAP. X.

WE ſee in this chapter: I. The calling and the names of the twelve apoſtles. II. The commands which our Lord gave them when he ſent them the firſt time into *Judea*, to declare that the kingdom of God was come. He foretels them that great troubles ſhould ariſe in the world on account of the Goſpel, and that they ſhould be perſecuted; but to encourage them, he aſſured them of the divine protection and aſſiſtance; ſets before them his own example; exhorts them not to fear men, but God only; and declares what will happen to thoſe who confeſs or who deny him before men. Laſtly, He promiſes to reward thoſe who ſhall receive his diſciples, and do them good.

REFLECTIONS.

JESUS CHRIST choſe the apoſtles to be the witneſſes of his life, his preaching, and his miracles, and that they themſelves might alſo go and preach the Goſpel, and work miracles, firſt among the *Jews*, and afterwards throughout the world. Now ſince our Lord made choice of them, and God has been pleaſed to preſerve their names in the ſacred writings, their memory ought to be bleſſed in the church; we ought to imitate their virtues, and ſubmit to the doctrine which

which they taught, as well by word of mouth as in their writings. II. *Jeſus Chriſt* forbad his apoſtles to go at that time among the Gentiles, or to the *Samaritans*, and commanded them to preach the Goſpel to the *Jews* only, becauſe the time was not yet come that the apoſtles ſhould go into all parts of the world. For the ſame reaſon he bade them make no proviſion for their journey, it being not neceſſary then, becauſe they were not to go far off, and that their journies were to be but ſhort, the deſign of this firſt miſſion being only to ſpread among the *Jews*, with greater expedition, the news of the coming of the kingdom of God: Another reaſon was, by this means to teach them to depend upon Providence. III. In the inſtructions which our Lord gave his apoſtles, we learn, that thoſe who preach the Goſpel ought to do it with great diſintereſtedneſs, prudence, zeal, and boldneſs; without fearing men, or death itſelf. IV. We learn that his doctrine is received by none but thoſe who have a true heart, and who are of a meek and quiet ſpirit; that it is to perſons of this character that the miniſters of the Goſpel ſhould apply themſelves; but when they meet with people who will not hear nor receive them, they ſhould leave them; and that thoſe who thus reject the offers of God's grace, ſhall be moſt ſeverely puniſhed. V. In this diſcourſe of our Lord, we have a ſtrong proof of the divinity of the Chriſtian Religion, ſince the apoſtles who preached it, and thoſe who firſt embraced it, were expoſed to divers perſecutions, and ſealed the truth of the Goſpel, and the ſincerity of their own teſtimony, with their blood. VI. We may make here ſeveral uſeful reflections, whereof theſe are the chief: That thoſe who make profeſſion of truth and piety, do often expoſe themſelves to hatred and perſecution, but that God aſſiſts them in a wonderful manner; that we ſhould not fear men, who can only hurt our body, but God alone, who can caſt both body and ſoul into hell; that troubles and diviſions often ariſe in the world on account of the Goſpel, but that this is entirely owing

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to the faults of men; that Chriſtians ought to be ready to renounce all that is deareſt to them in this world, to follow *Jeſus Chriſt*. And laſtly, That our Lord will abundantly recompence the piety and charity of thoſe that ſhall receive and aſſiſt his diſciples. All theſe conſiderations ſerve to encourage us ſtedfaſtly and openly to profeſs the Chriſtian Religion; to practiſe all its duties, and particularly to exerciſe works of charity with pleaſure and perſeverance.

CHAP. XI.

I. *JOHN* the Baptiſt having ſent two of his diſciples to *Jeſus Chriſt*, to know of him whether he were the Meſſiah, our Lord ſhews that he was ſo, by working miracles before them. II. He ſpeaks of the nature and excellence of the office of *John* the Baptiſt. III. He complains of the obſtinacy of the *Jews*, who had made no improvement either by the miniſtry of *John* the Baptiſt, or his own; and threatens the cities of *Galilee*, where he had preached and done miracles, without producing in them repentance and amendment. IV. He praiſes God that ſuch as were of a meek and humble ſpirit did receive his doctrine, whilſt thoſe who paſſed in the world for the wiſeſt and moſt knowing rejected it; and he invites all thoſe that were weary and heavy laden to come unto him.

REFLECTIONS.

TO make a right uſe of the reading of this chapter we muſt obſerve, I. That if *John* the Baptiſt ſent to inquire of our Lord whether he was the Meſſiah, it was not that he doubted of it: this would be a groſs reflection upon that holy man, who had conſtantly declared that *Jeſus* was the Son of God, and of whom our Lord in the Goſpel, and even in this chapter, gives us a moſt extraordinary character. But *John* the Baptiſt ſent his diſciples to convince them that *Jeſus* was he whom the *Jews* expected. II. However, our Lord would not tell them plainly that he was the

Meſſiah, but contented himſelf to prove by miracles that he was ſo, and to warn them not be be offended if he appeared in a very mean condition. III. It was with the ſame deſign that he made thoſe who heard him take notice, that when they went to *John* the Baptiſt in the wilderneſs, it was not to ſee a reed ſhaken with the wind; meaning that they went not upon an occaſion of very little importance, or to ſee a very inconſiderable perſon; neither was it a man that was to appear with pomp and ſplendor, like thoſe we meet with in kings palaces, but that they had ſeen in the perſon of *John* the Baptiſt a great prophet, and even the greateſt of prophets, ſince he was the forerunner of the Meſſiah; and that nevertheleſs people oppoſed him, and the kingdom of God which he preached, ever ſince he began to appear. *Chriſt* told them all this, to ſhew that his kingdom was not of this world, and that they ought not to be ſurpriſed if he himſelf appeared in ſo low and abject a condition, and even though he were rejected. IV. Our Lord's complaint againſt the *Jews*, who had profited neither by the preaching of *John* the Baptiſt nor his own; objecting that the life of the former was too ſtrict, and that of the latter not ſtrict enough, may convince us that nothing can ſatisfy unbelieving and vicious men, who reject all the means God makes uſe of for their conviction, and even take occaſion from thence to harden themſelves yet more. V. The threatenings which our Lord denounced againſt thoſe cities where he had worked miracles, and they did not repent, is a warning to us, that thoſe people who receive the greateſt favours from God, having the Goſpel preached among them, and they do not grow better, ſhall be puniſhed with the utmoſt ſeverity. VI. Our Saviour's giving thanks to God, becauſe the mean and humble had received his doctrine, whilſt it was rejected by the great and wiſe men of the world, teaches us, that we cannot receive the Goſpel without an upright, humble and honeſt heart, without renouncing worldly glory and falſe wiſdom. Laſtly ſince our Saviour does with

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ſo much tenderneſs invite all ſuch as labour and are heavy laden to be his diſciples, and aſſures them that his *yoke is eaſy, and his burden light;* let us draw near to him with an humble and lively ſenſe of our own miſery, and with an ardent deſire of being delivered from it; let us chearfully ſubmit to his doctrine and divine precepts; let us be meek and lowly of heart as he was, and then we ſhall find in him peace of mind, and perfect happineſs.

CHAP. XII. 1—21.

I. OUR Saviour vindicates his diſciples plucking the ears of corn on the ſabbath day. II. He cures a man who had a withered hand, and confounds the Phariſees, who were offended at his having wrought that miracle upon the ſabbath day. III. He charges the people not to publiſh his miracles: whereupon St. *Matthew* quotes a prophecy of *Iſaiah*, deſcribing the prudence, humility, and meekneſs, that ſhould appear in the Meſſiah's manner of exerciſing his miniſtry.

REFLECTIONS.

THERE are three reflections to be made upon this firſt part of the twelfth chapter of St. *Matthew*. I. The firſt relates to the malice and hypocriſy of the Phariſees, who found fault with the diſciples for plucking the ears of corn on the ſabbath day, and becauſe their maſter on the ſabbath had healed a man with a withered hand. This is the character of hypocrites, and thoſe that have only a falſe zeal; they are offended at things in their nature innocent, and even ſometimes at ſuch as are good, neceſſary, and acceptable to God, whilſt they themſelves neglect the moſt eſſential duties of religion, and eſpecially that of charity. II. What our Lord ſays upon this occaſion deſerves our ſerious attention, and chiefly theſe words, *I will have mercy, and not ſacrifice.* Let us learn from hence, that religion does not barely conſiſt in things external, and in the obſervation of ceremonies, that indeed

thoſe things muſt not be deſpiſed or neglected, and have their uſe when practiſed in conformity to his will who has appointed them; but that what God requires above all is, that we ſhould obey his commandments, that we ſhould have true charity, and exerciſe works of mercy. III. The third reflection may be made upon the behaviour of *Jeſus Chriſt*, who forbids the publiſhing his miracles; and upon theſe words of *Iſaiah: He will not quench the ſmoaking flax, nor break intirely the bruiſed reed.* Here we ſee the great prudence of our Lord, who avoided every thing that looked like vanity or oſtentation; as likewiſe his humility, meekneſs, and condeſcenſion. We obſerve particularly, that he diſcourages nobody, that he bears with the weakneſs of men with great patience; and while there is any good in us, he does not forſake us. This ought, on one hand, to encourage and make us confide in him; and, on the other, induce us to imitate him; to be humble, meek, and peaceable as he was; to avoid vain-glory, and a deſire of praiſe; to ſhun quarrels and diſputes; to exerciſe great forbearance towards men; to make allowance for, and condeſcend to their weakneſſes: thus we ſhall be like *Jeſus Chriſt*, and ſhew that we are his diſciples.

CHAP. XII. 22—50.

I. *CHRIST* cures a demoniack; and as the Phariſees attributed that miracle to the power of the devil, our Lord ſhews how falſe and impious that accuſation was; ſaying, that the devil would not deſtroy his own kingdom, and that he could not caſt out devils, if he had not a greater power than that of devils; he threatened the Phariſees that their blaſphemies ſhould never be pardoned, and that their impious diſcourſe was a proof of the extreme wickedneſs of their hearts. II. Being deſired by the Phariſees to ſhew them a ſign, he refuſed to do it, referring them to the reſurrection, which was to be the laſt and ſtrongeſt proof of his divine miſſion; and he laments the unbelief of the *Jews*,

Jews, mentioning upon that account the example of the *Ninevites*, that of the queen of *Sheba*, and a parable. III. He declares that his true diſciples were as dear to him as his neareſt relations.

REFLECTIONS.

WE here find, I. That the Phariſees, inſtead of acknowledging the divine power, which appeared ſo evidently in our Saviour's miracles, ſaid, he caſt out devils by the power of the devil. We ſee in this inſtance, that men blinded by their paſſions, can reſiſt the moſt powerful means of conviction. II. Our Lord declares that this blaſphemy of the Phariſees, in aſcribing to the devil what proceeded from the Spirit of God, ſhould never be forgiven them; becauſe ſuch blaſphemy was a ſign of their deſperate wickedneſs, and incurable obſtinacy. We cannot at this day fall into exactly the ſame ſin as theſe Phariſees did; but we may become extremely guilty by impious and profane thoughts and expreſſions, by reſiſting the truth when made known to us, or by quenching the operations of God's holy Spirit in our hearts. III. From the blaſphemy of the Phariſees our Lord took an occaſion to declare that good diſcourſes are the ſigns of a good heart; that wicked diſcourſes proceed from a corrupt heart; and that men muſt give an account of all the evil words they have ſpoken. Let us learn from hence, that a good man is known by his words, and that the way to regulate them, is to ſanctify our heart. IV. Upon the Phariſees deſiring *Chriſt* to give them a ſign, after ſo many miracles he had already wrought in their ſight, we may obſerve, that unbelievers, and thoſe who have a wicked heart, are never ſatisfied, and that nothing is clear or ſtrong enough for their conviction. And our Lord's refuſing to give them ſuch a ſign, ſhews us, that when God has done all that is neceſſary to overcome the hardneſs of men's hearts, if it proves ineffectual, he gives them up to their own obſtinate temper. V. If the examples of the

the queen of *Sheba*, and of the *Ninevites*, condemned the unbelieving *Jews*, they will condemn us much more if we do not repent, ſince God has been more kind to us than he was to them. VI. By the compariſon of the evil ſpirit which entered again into a man after it had gone out, our Lord ſhewed the miſeries that were to befall the *Jews*, who, after all he had done to cure their infidelity, ſtill perſiſted in it: and it is a warning to us, that thoſe who have been partakers of the grace of God, and make an ill uſe of it; ſhall be deprived of it, and ſhall fall into greater condemnation. Laſtly, Our Saviour's declaring that thoſe who do the will of God are as dear to him as his mother and brethren, teaches us, that holineſs, and the obſervation of God's commandments, is the true mark of the diſciples of *Jeſus*, and is what admits us into a ſhare of his love; that therefore we ought to apply ourſelves above all things to hear his word, and keep it. This likewiſe ſhews us, that thoſe who love God, and fear him, are the people to whom we ought chiefly to devote our love and eſteem.

CHAP. XIII. 1—23.

OUR Lord propoſes the parable of the ſeed, and afterwards explains it in private to his diſciples.

REFLECTIONS.

IT is proper to obſerve in general, upon the parables in this chapter, and in ſeveral other places in the Goſpel, that our Lord uſed, in his teaching, to make uſe of parables and ſimilitudes; and that his diſciples and the people might remember them the better, he borrowed them from the plaineſt and moſt familiar ſubjects. Theſe parables were of two kinds. Some were clear, and others ſomewhat obſcure. Theſe laſt *Jeſus Chriſt* made uſe of, when he was ſpeaking of ſome points which his hearers were not at that time able to comprehend, and which he did not think fit to declare openly before his death. Such are the parables

parables which foretold his being put to death, the rejection of the *Jews*, and the calling of the Gentiles in their ſtead. Theſe truths he repreſented by images and ſimilitudes, very plain and eaſy to remember, and which in a ſhort time would, by the event, be made perfectly clear and intelligible. Theſe parables diſplay the great wiſdom of our Lord, prove that he foreknew things to come, ſince moſt of them were prophetic; and afford us, in their completion, a convincing proof of the divinity of the Goſpel. The deſign of *Jeſus Chriſt* in the parable of the ſeed is, to teach his diſciples how the word of God is received by thoſe to whom it is declared. He ſpeaks of four kinds of perſons: The firſt, are thoſe on whom the word makes no impreſſion, and whoſe hearts are entirely hardened, which is repreſented by the ſeed falling on the way ſide. The ſecond are thoſe that receive the word with joy, but embracing the Goſpel without due reflection, forſake the truth and holineſs, as ſoon as they are expoſed to perſecution, or ſome other trial: *Chriſt* repreſents the ſtate of ſuch people, by the ſeed falling in ſtony places which indeed ſprings up, but having no root, withers away preſently. The third ſort of hearers, are thoſe who make the word of God of none effect by the love of riches and pleaſures, and by the cares of this life, as ſeed falling among thorns is choaked and becometh unfruitful. The laſt are thoſe who receive it in an honeſt and good heart, where it produces its fruit and its effect, and who perſevere to the end; this is repreſented by the ſeed ſown in good ground, where it brings forth fruit in abundance. This is the meaning and deſign of this beautiful parable: and it tends to inſtruct us in the uſe we are to make of the Goſpel when preached to us. What our Saviour ſaid to his diſciples when he explained to them this parable, ſhould lead us Chriſtians to acknowledge, how happy we are to be inſtructed in theſe divine truths, to know the myſteries of the kingdom of God, and to be more enlightened than all the ancient prophets. Let us make a good uſe of theſe advantages, leſt we fall into

ſin,

ſin, and into the condemnation of thoſe who ſee and hear, but will not receive nor underſtand the truth, and refuſe to be converted.

CHAP. XIII. 24—58.

I. *CHRIST* propoſes ſeveral parables; as the parable of the tares, the grain of muſtard-ſeed, and the leaven of treaſure hid in a field, a pearl of great price, and of the net. II. He then exhorts his diſciples to make a right uſe of his inſtructions, and afterwards goes to *Nazareth*, where few believed on him.

REFLECTIONS.

THE parables of the tares, and of the net, have the ſame tendency: they ſignify, according to the explanation our Saviour himſelf gives of them, that among thoſe who ſhould profeſs the Goſpel, there would be many hypocrites, and that the wicked would be mixed with the good till the end of the world; but that then they ſhall be ſeparated from each other; that the wicked ſhall be condemned to everlaſting torments, and the righteous received into eternal glory. The uſe therefore we are to make of theſe parables is, not to be prejudiced againſt the Goſpel, if we ſee among Chriſtians ſome that fall into vice and error; to ſtand upon our guard, and avoid the company of wicked men, leſt we be ſeduced by them; but, nevertheleſs, to think always charitably of them; to do our utmoſt to recover them from their errors; and, as to ourſelves, to labour to be of the number of the righteous, that at *Chriſt*'s ſecond coming, we may be admitted into his kingdom. By the ſimilitude of the muſtard-ſeed, and that of leaven, the deſign of our Lord was to ſhew, that though the number of his diſciples was then but very ſmall, and his doctrine ſcarce known in the world, yet it ſhould be ſoon ſpread over the whole earth. *Chriſt* foretold this in myſtical and hidden expreſſions; not thinking fit, at that time, to declare openly, for fear of giving offence to the *Jews*, that the Gentiles and

and all nations ſhould come into the church. Thus theſe parables are prophetical, and their true import and meaning is manifeſt in the eſtabliſhment of Chriſtianity in ſo many parts of the world, as their divine author had foretold. Let us give thanks to God, that this heavenly doctrine has been extended even to us, and let us beſeech him, that he would more and more eſtabliſh his kingdom among us, by ſanctifying his church; and that he would call to the knowledge thereof thoſe people who are deprived of it, or who have never embraced it, to the end that the whole earth may be full of his knowledge and of his glory, and that the name of God the Father may be glorified in all places, through *Jeſus Chriſt* our Lord. *Amen.*

The ſimilitudes of the hidden treaſure, and of the pearl, may convince us, that there is nothing more precious nor more excellent than the Goſpel, and the advantages that attend it; that the greateſt happineſs which we can enjoy, is to be poſſeſſed of thoſe advantages; and therefore, that we ought gladly to improve every opportunity of procuring them, and even to renounce all that is deareſt to us in this world to acquire ſuch a precious treaſure. Let us carefully retain theſe divine inſtructions of our Lord *Jeſus Chriſt*; let us lay them up in our hearts, that they may continually furniſh us with neceſſary ſupplies and encouragements to reſiſt temptations, and excite us to the love of God and the practice of good works. We may obſerve, at the end of this chapter, that the inhabitants of *Nazareth* believed not on *Jeſus Chriſt*, though they heard his doctrine, and ſaw ſome of his miracles, becauſe they looked upon him as the ſon of a carpenter, and becauſe he was bred among them; which made our Lord tell them, that no prophet was received in his own country. Men are too apt to ſlight God's favours, and the moſt valuable bleſſings he vouchſafes them, becauſe they are common, and may be eaſily enjoyed; and therefore God, ſeeing their ingratitude, deprives

deprives them of them, as it happened to thoſe of *Nazareth*, becauſe of their unbelief.

CHAP. XIV.

ST. *Matthew* relates three things in this chapter. I. The death of *John* the Baptiſt. II. *Chriſt*'s feeding five thouſand people with five loaves and two fiſhes. III. Another miracle of our Lord, who, when his diſciples were expoſed to a ſtorm, came to them walking upon the ſea.

REFLECTIONS.

I. WE may make this general reflection upon the death of *John* the Baptiſt, namely, that God was pleaſed to ſuffer that this holy man, who had preached the coming of the kingdom of God, ſhould die a violent death, to convince the *Jews* that his kingdom was not to be a temporal one; and that they might not be offended when *Chriſt* himſelf ſhould be put to death. It may be obſerved in the next place, that the cauſe of *John* the Baptiſt's death, was the zeal of that prophet in reproving *Herod* for his criminal correſpondence with *Herodias*; the hatred which that immodeſt woman had conceived againſt *John* on that account, and the complaiſance *Herod* had for her. The reflections that are to be made upon all this are, That the ſervants of God ought to rebuke all ſorts of perſons with courage and zeal, though they often draw upon themſelves thereby the hatred of wicked men; that impurity, and the love of pleaſures, make people commit many ſins: And laſtly, that great evils may reſult from raſh oaths, as well as from a falſe ſhame, and the complaiſance that we have for wicked people. The miracle of the five loaves has this particularity in it, that it was wrought in the preſence of ſeveral thouſand men, who were witneſſes, and ſhared in the benefit of it; which renders this miracle yet more certain, and proves the wonderful power of our Lord, as well as his great goodneſs towards the people that followed him.

him. Laſtly, The other miracle that *Chriſt* did, when he went to his diſciples walking upon the ſea, is another proof of his unlimited power, and of his love to his diſciples: he was pleaſed, upon this occaſion, to make St. *Peter* walk on the water, to confirm the faith of that apoſtle and of his brethren: and to aſſure them that they ſhould afterwards do many extraordinary miracles, and that no danger ſhould terrify them. As to ourſelves, we are to make two reflections. Firſt, that if true Chriſtians are expoſed to dangers, God comes ſeaſonably to their aſſiſtance; and ſecondly, that as the zeal and faith of St. *Peter* enabled him at firſt to walk on the water, into which he afterwards ſunk through fear; ſo it is the want of faith only that makes us yield to temptations and dangers, but that we may happily ſurmount them by faith, and the divine aſſiſtance,

CHAP. XV.

I. *CHRIST* vindicates his diſciples for not obſerving the traditions and cuſtoms of the *Jews*, who waſhed their hands before their meals: a ceremony which the *Jews* obſerved, not for cleanlineſs only, but as a part of religion, without which they thought they muſt be unclean. Our Lord reproaches the Phariſees, who were offended at it, with violating themſelves the divine law, by their traditions, teaching that if any one devoted to God a part of his eſtate, wherewith he might have relieved his father or mother, it was not lawful for him, after ſuch a vow, to apply it to their aſſiſtance. II. In the next place, our Lord ſhews what it is that defiles a man, and what does not defile him. III. He heals the daughter of a *Canaanitiſh* woman, and ſeveral ſick people; and, IV. Feeds four thouſand men with ſeven loaves and a few fiſhes.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS diſcourſe between *Chriſt* and the Phariſees, furniſhes us with the following inſtructions: I. That hypocrites

hypocrites make religion and piety to conſiſt only in external duties, and oftentimes in ſuch as are vain and of very ſmall weight; that they ſcrupulouſly obſerve theſe things, and condemn thoſe that do not, whilſt they themſelves violate the moſt important duties, and the moſt poſitive commands of God. II. That the duty of children to their parents is altogether inviolable, that nothing can diſpenſe with it, and that they are particularly obliged to aſſiſt them in time of need. III. That vows and oaths, which are raſh, and contrary to the divine law, ought not to be kept. IV. That God rejects the worſhip of thoſe who only honour him with their mouths and lips, but whoſe hearts are far from him; and that he will be ſerved as he has commanded in his word, and not according to the inventions and directions of men. V. That not only external actions defile men, and render them guilty before God, but likewiſe and chiefly the wicked thoughts and motions of the heart, and deſires tending to impurity, to unrighteouſneſs, to pride, to ſlander, and other ſins. This is a doctrine which we muſt never forget, and which obliges us more particularly to ſtudy the internal ſanctification and purity of the heart and conſcience. VI. We ought to take particular notice of the miracle which *Chriſt* wrought in healing the daughter of the *Canaanitiſh* woman. He refuſed at firſt to cure her, becauſe her mother was a Gentile; his reaſon for ſo doing was, not only by that means to excite the zeal of that woman, but likewiſe becauſe the time was not yet come in which the Gentiles were to be called; and becauſe, during his ſtay upon earth, he wrought miracles only among the *Jews*. But ſeeing her perſeverance and great humility, he did at laſt what ſhe deſired of him. By this example we may obſerve, that prayers made with faith, humility, and perſeverance, are very acceptable to God, and very powerful; that if God does not hear us at firſt, it is to try us, to encourage our zeal, and to render us more ſenſible of our own unworthineſs; but if we continue to call upon him fervently, he grants us at laſt thoſe favours

favours we beg of him. Laſtly, This miracle, as well as a great number more which our Lord wrought in healing the ſick, in feeding four thouſand men with ſeven loaves and a few fiſhes, and the like, ſhould lead us to acknowledge the infinite power of *Jeſus Chriſt*, and his exceeding great love towards men; and ought to excite us to praiſe God at the hearing of ſo many wonders, and to glorify him, as thoſe did who were eye-witneſſes of them.

CHAP. XVI.

THIS chapter has four parts: I. *Chriſt* refuſes to ſhew a ſign, which the Phariſees deſired of him, and reproaches them for their blindneſs. II. He warns his diſciples to take heed of the leaven of the Phariſees. III. Having aſked the apoſtles their opinion concerning him, St. *Peter* confeſſes that he was the *Chriſt*, the Son of the living God: whereupon our Lord makes him very gracious promiſes. IV. He foretels his own death: exhorts his diſciples to prepare for ſufferings; and to engage them ſo to do, he repreſents the worth of the ſoul, and the great importance of ſecuring the ſalvation of it. He likewiſe foretels that ſome of his diſciples ſhould not die till his kingdom was eſtabliſhed, and he himſelf come to deſtroy the *Jews*: which proved true of thoſe diſciples who lived till that time, and particularly of St. *John*.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE firſt reflection we ought to make here, relates to the blindneſs of the Phariſees, who, notwithſtanding *Chriſt* had done ſo many miracles to convince them that the time of the Meſſiah's coming was fulfilled, were ſtill urgent with our Lord to ſhew them a ſign, which he very juſtly refuſed to do. When God has given ſufficient proofs of the truth of the Goſpel, if men do not ſubmit to it, they muſt not expect that God will work continual miracles to overcome their unbelief. II. The meaning of the warning that *Chriſt* gave

gave his diſciples, to beware of the leaven of the Phariſees and of the Sadducees was, that they ſhould be upon their guard againſt the doctrine of the Phariſees, who ſtuck to the outſide of religion, and to the traditions; and alſo againſt the doctrine of the Sadducees, who denied the reſurrection, and the immortality of the ſoul. This is a leſſon to us, to avoid, with great care, ſuperſtiton and hypocriſy, as well as impious and libertine opinions. III. It appears from this chapter, that the *Jews* had a high opinion of *Jeſus Chriſt*; and particularly that the apoſtles were firmly perſuaded that he was the *Chriſt*, the Son of the living God: this is the great and fundamental truth, which ought to be believed and confeſſed by Chriſtians before the whole world. IV. The promiſe that *Chriſt* made to St. *Peter*, when he ſaid to him, *Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and I will give thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven;* ſignifies that St. *Peter* would be one of the principal miniſters in the eſtabliſhment of his church; and ſhould firſt preach the Goſpel both to *Jews* and *Gentiles*. V. When we ſee *Chriſt* foretelling his death, and ſeverely rebuking St. Peter, who (being full of the prejudices of the *Jews*) could not be perſuaded that the Meſſiah was to die, we muſt conſider, that our Lord ſpake in that ſharp maaner, not becauſe he did not love the apoſtle, but more fully to convince him, and all the diſciples, that it was neceſſary he ſhould ſuffer death; and to ſhew them he was reſolved ſo to do. VI. The laſt verſes of this chapter furniſh us with ſeveral inſtructions of great moment, and particularly theſe three; 1. That the firſt thing *Chriſt* requires of his diſciples is, to renounce themſelves, and to be prepared for ſufferings; and that the deſire of preſerving our lives ſhould never hinder us from following and obeying him. 2. That the ſalvation of the ſoul is the moſt important thing imaginable; and that it is of no advantage to gain the whole world, if a man loſes his own ſoul. 3. That the Son of God will come with

glory from heaven, to render to all according to their works.

CHAP. XVII.

THIS chapter contains, I. The hiſtory of the tranſfiguration of *Jeſus Chriſt*. II. The diſcourſe he had with his apoſtles about the coming of *Elias* whom the *Jews* expected. III. The caſting out a devil, which the apoſtles could not caſt out. IV. A miracle wrought by *Chriſt* for the payment of the tribute-money, given by the *Jews* for the maintenance of the temple and divine ſervice.

REFLECTIONS.

I. OUR Lord was pleaſed to be transfigured a little before his death in the preſence of three of his apoſtles, and to ſhew them his glory, to ſtrengthen their faith, and to fortify them againſt the ſcandal which his death might have given them. The appearing of *Moſes* and *Elias*, at that time, ſhews, that *Chriſt* was he whoſe coming the prophets had foretold, and that he was greater than the moſt excellent of the prophets. It proves alſo, that theſe holy men were not annihilated, and that therefore there is another life reſerved for good men after this. And the voice which God cauſed to be heard from heaven on this occaſion, informs us, that *Jeſus Chriſt* is the Son of God, to whom alone we ſhould hearken, and to whom we owe perfect obedience. II. What *Chriſt* ſaid to his diſciples, that *John* the Baptiſt was that *Elias*, whoſe coming the prophets had foretold, ſhould convince us of the dignity of the perſon of *John* the Baptiſt, and of the authority of his miniſtey. In the hiſtory of the demoniack, whom the apoſtles could not cure, we find that *Chriſt* was inveſted with a power which nothing could reſiſt, and that he was at the ſame time full of compaſſion towards the miſerable. We likewiſe ſee, that the want of faith in the apoſtles, was the cauſe they could not work this miracle; and that,

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on the contrary, the father of that poor creature did by his faith obtain the cure of his ſon. This ſhews us, how neceſſary and how efficacious faith is, and how great reaſon we have to endeavour to be ſtrengthened in it, ſince it is not leſs neceſſary now for our ſalvation, than it was formerly to enable to perform or procure miracles. The concern which the apoſtles ſhewed when *Chriſt* foretold his death, is another proof of the weakneſs of their faith; but we who know that *Chriſt* died that he might obtain for us everlaſting life, ought to conſider his death as the foundation of our hopes and our happineſs. Laſtly, the miraculous manner by which our Lord paid the tribute, is a remarkable effect of his power; he was alſo pleaſed to ſhew thereby that he did not deſpiſe the things that concerned religion; and it is an example for us to ſubmit to public order, and to give, without grudging, ſome portion of our goods, when the ſervice of God and works of piety are concerned.

CHAP. XVIII.

I. THE apoſtles aſk our Lord, which of them ſhould be the greateſt in the kingdom of heaven. They put this queſtion to him, becauſe they were of the ſame opinion with the *Jews*, that the kingdom of the Meſſiah would be eſtabliſhed upon earth, and that there would be great offices and places, to be obtained in this kingdom. Our Lord, to undeceive them, places a little child in the midſt of them, and exhorts them to become like little children: he adviſes them not to deſpiſe thoſe that believe in him, though they are very mean as to this world. He repreſents to them the great ſin of giving offence to any of the faithful, and that he calls even the greateſt ſinners to repentance and ſalvation. This whole diſcourſe of *Jeſus Chriſt* tends to deliver the apoſtles from thoſe prejudices under which they laboured with reſpect to the kingdom of the Meſſiah, and to inſpire them with the ſentiments of charity and humility. In the

the ſecond part of this chapter, *Chriſt* teaches his diſciples how to behave towards their offending brethren, and what the church is to do to thoſe who refuſe to ſubmit to its directions. After this he repreſents, by a parable, the obligation we are under to forgive one another.

REFLECTIONS.

THE Saviour of the world teaches us in the firſt part of this chapter, I. That to enter into the kingdom of heaven, we muſt be extremely humble, and ſet our hearts no more upon the glories and honours of this world, than little children do. II. That we ought to have a very great regard for the true diſciples of *Chriſt*, though they ſhould be but low and mean among men; that good people are dear to God, and therefore we ought to eſteem and comfort them, ſince he cauſes his holy angels to watch over them, and will ſeverely puniſh thoſe who afflict, deſpiſe, or offend them. Theſe conſiderations ſhould likewiſe encourage the faithful, and inſpire them with great confidence. III. *Chriſt* ſays of offences that they are a great evil, that they muſt needs come, and yet that God is not the cauſe of them; that they proceed intirely from the faults of men; and that he will puniſh thoſe who are the occaſion of them. It follows from hence, that we ought to avoid ſin and giving offence with the utmoſt care; and that we may do it by following our Lord's advice, and avoiding every thing that may be a ſtumbling-block to ourſelves or others. Laſtly, What our Lord ſays here, that there is joy in heaven over one repenting ſinner, ſhews, that it is not lawful to deſpiſe any body; but, on the contrary, that we ought to procure the converſion of ſinners, and the edification and ſalvation of all men, as far as in us lies. In the ſecond part of this chapter, I. *Chriſt* eſtabliſhes the authority and diſcipline of his church, and the neceſſity of reproofs, both private and public; he ſhews, that all the members of the church ought to ſubmit

themſelves to the diſcipline eſtabliſhed in it, and that ſuch as refuſe to hear the church, ought to be looked upon as heathens and publicans; that is to ſay, they ſhould not be any longer accounted members of the church, but be cut off from its communion: And he declares that God ratifies and confirms in heaven, what the church does here below agreeable to his intentions. II. The promiſe that our Lord makes, to be preſent with, and hear thoſe that are gathered together in his name, teaches us, that the prayers that are offered up in the ſpirit of unity and charity, are very acceptable to God, as well as thoſe congregations that are formed to ſerve and call upon him. Laſtly, *Chriſt* inſtructs us in the nature and neceſſity of forgiveneſs. He explains the nature of it, by ſaying, that a man ought to pardon even ſeventy times ſeven faults; which denotes, that forgiveneſs ought to be general and unlimited, and that we ſhould be diſpoſed to pardon all perſons, and all ſorts of offences, even ſuch as are continued and repeated; and that at all times without ever being diſcouraged. He ſhews the neceſſity of ſuch forgiveneſs, by the parable of the ſervant to whom his maſter had remitted a very conſiderable debt, and who would not pardon a very ſmall ſum to one of his fellow-ſervants. This parable ſets before our eyes, Firſt, The infinite goodneſs of God, who vouchſafes to pardon us, his ſervants and his creatures, though our ſins are very great and very numerous: Secondly, The guilt and ingratitude of thoſe who refuſe to pardon men who are their equals, and whoſe offences are very trifling in compariſon of the ſins we commit againſt God. Thirdly, The juſt and terrible puniſhment of all thoſe who do not pardon heartily, and univerſally, the offences and injuries they have received.

CHAP. XIX.

I. THE Phariſees having aſked our Lord, whether it was lawful for huſbands to put away their wives, as was the practice of the *Jews*; he anſwers them,

them, that divorces were contrary to the firſt inſtitution of marriage, and that they ought not to prevail any longer. II. He bleſſes little children that were brought unto him. III. A rich young man aſking what he muſt do to be ſaved, our Saviour, to prove him, whether he was prepared to follow him, told him, to go and ſell all that he had. This anſwer diſcouraging the young man, he took occaſion from hence to declare, that the love of riches would hinder many from being ſaved, and promiſes his apoſtles, who had forſaken all to follow him, that they ſhould ſit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of *Iſrael*; that is, ſhould be highly exalted when his kingdom was eſtabliſhed, and be very conſiderable in the church. He promiſes alſo to reward thoſe who ſhould leave all for the ſake of the Goſpel.

REFLECTIONS.

I. WHAT our Saviour ſays at the beginning of this chapter, with reſpect to the divorces that were in uſe among the *Jews*, teaches us in general, that many things which had been tolerated till that time, by reaſon of the condition of that people, and of their hard and carnal temper, would not be allowed among Chriſtians, becauſe God has given them greater light, and called them to a higher degree of holineſs. II. We learn here particularly, that by the divine inſtitution, a man and a woman are inſeparably united by the laws of matrimony; that thoſe laws ought to be inviolably obſerved; and that nothing but adultery can juſtify a divorce, nor afford a liberty of marrying again. *Chriſt* ſhews us beſides, that the Goſpel calls us to great chaſtity, and even that there would be Chriſtians that would abſolutely renounce marriage, in order to ſerve God more acceptably, and with leſs interruption labour in promoting Chriſtianity. III. Our Lord's bleſſing the little children which were preſented to him, ſhews us, that ſuch children are dear to him, and that he is diſpoſed to receive and bleſs them;

from whence we may infer, that the devoting them to him by prayer and baptiſm, is very agreeable to his will; he would likewiſe teach us thereby, that we muſt be like little children in ſimplicity, innocence, and meekneſs, if we would enter into the kingdom of God. IV. The diſcourſe our Lord had with the rich young man mentioned in this chapter, teaches us, that to enter into life everlaſting, we muſt keep the commandments of God; and further, be ready to forſake all that we poſſeſs in this world when God calls us to it, and when we cannot keep them without being wanting in our duty towards him. The concern which this young man diſcovered at what *Chriſt* ſaid to him, and the declaration of our Saviour, that it would be very hard for rich men to reſolve to forſake their goods to come into the church, ſhews, that riches do commonly fix our hearts upon the world, and that the enjoyment of them is always dangerous. Nevertheleſs, *Chriſt* has taught us, that ſuch a renunciation of worldly goods is not an impoſſible thing; but, on the contrary, both practicable, and even eaſy and agreeable too, when we are enlightened by faith, and aſſiſted by the Spirit of God. If all Chriſtians are not called, as the apoſtles were, to forſake all to follow *Chriſt*, we ought, at leaſt, to take heed that the good things of this life do not hinder our ſalvation; we ought not to ſet our heart upon them, but ſhould learn to uſe them without abuſing them, and to employ them in works of piety and charity. By this means we ſhall procure to ourſelves a treaſure in heaven, and partake of thoſe bleſſings with which our Lord has promiſed to reward, both in this world and the next, ſuch as ſhall fulfil all theſe duties.

CHAP. XX.

THIS chapter contains, I. The parable of the labourers, who, going to work in the vineyard at different hours of the day, did all of them receive the ſame wages. II. *Chriſt*'s foretelling his own death and

and reſurrection. III. His anſwer to the mother of St. *James* and St. *John*, who deſired for her ſons the chief place in his kingdom. IV. He gives ſight to two blind men.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE deſign of our Lord in the parable of the labourers, was to teach his diſciples, that the glorious rewards which he had promiſed to thoſe who ſhould forſake all for the Goſpel, did not relate to them only; but that others, who ſhould be called after them, even from among the Gentiles, would partake of the ſame rewards as thoſe that were called firſt; and that, far from being jealous upon this account, they ought to rejoice at it. We muſt not, however, make a wrong uſe of this parable, nor conclude from thence, that it will be ſoon enough to repent at the end of our lives; on the contrary, we ſhould conſider, that all thoſe that went into the vineyard at different hours of the day, went thither as ſoon as the maſter of the vineyard ſent them; that thoſe who did not go till the end of the day, did not go ſooner, becauſe they were not ſooner ſent; and that this was the reaſon why they did receive the ſame wages as the reſt. From whence it appears, that thoſe who obey whenſoever God is pleaſed to call them; ſhall be ſaved; but this has no reſpect to thoſe, who have been called a long while, even from the beginning of their lives, and have refuſed to obey the call; this very parable proves, that ſuch are without excuſe; and that we are all of us indiſpenſibly obliged to labour with fidelity and perſeverance, and, as ſoon as God calls, to do his will. II. We may obſerve, in this chapter, that our Lord forewarned his diſciples of his being ſhortly to be put to death, that they might not be ſurpriſed when it did happen. III. *Chriſt*'s anſwer to the mother of *James* and *John* deſerves to be conſidered. This woman imagining, as the reſt of the *Jews* did, that the Meſſiah ſhould reign upon the earth, like the kings

kings of this world, claimed for her two ſons, the higheſt poſts in his kingdom, as being of our Lord's kindred, and even diſtinguiſhed from the reſt of the apoſtles upon ſeveral occaſions. *Jeſus Chriſt* condemned that requeſt, which ſhewed, that this woman did not underſtand the nature of his kingdom; and which might too have occaſioned jealouſies and diviſions among the apoſtles. He told them, that they ought rather to be humbled and abaſed, and prepared to drink of the ſame cup with him, and be baptized with his baptiſm; that is, to ſuffer as he ſhould, and not think of being exalted to dignities and preferments, like the great ones of this world; and that he might inſpire them with ſuch ſentiments, he referred them to his example, ſaying, that he was come into the world to appear like a ſervant, and to ſuffer death. Theſe words of our Saviour are a warning to all Chriſtians, to expel from their hearts pride and ambition; not to ſeek after honour, or affect to be preferred before others; but to live humbly, and bear our croſs, according to the example which the Son of God has given us. At the end of the chapter, we have a proof of our Lord's power, as well as of his tender compaſſion, in giving ſight to two blind men.

CHAP. XXI. 1—22.

I. OUR Lord makes his royal entry into *Jeruſalem*. II. Drives out of the temple thoſe that profaned it. III. Anſwers the Phariſees, who found fault with the acclamations of the people on his behalf. And, IV. Cauſes the fig-tree to wither away.

REFLECTIONS.

TO underſtand the reaſon and deſign of our Saviour's royal entry into *Jeruſalem*, we muſt obſerve, that he had avoided till then all appearance of pomp, and being acknowledged publicly for the Meſſiah; but he thought fit, ſix days before his death, to make known to the world that he was the Meſſiah foretold by

by the prophets, and to be acknowledged for ſuch by the people that attended him, and to enter into the temple in the midſt of the acclamations of a great multitude. Nevertheleſs, he did it after a manner that by no means reſembled the ſplendor of worldly princes; but which diſcovered a great deal of humility and meekneſs, and which was agreeable to what *Zechariah* had propheſied, ſaying, that the Meſſiah ſhould come *meek, and ſitting upon an aſs;* which tended to ſhew, that he was the great King which God had promiſed to his people; but that his kingdom was not of this world. Let us here acknowledge the glory of our Redeemer, and at the ſame time his great goodneſs; let us render him our homage, in imitation of the people that followed him to *Jeruſalem;* and ſince we know him much better than they did, let us worſhip him with greater reſpect and reverence; let us rejoice at his coming, and ſay, *Bleſſed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord.* That action of *Chriſt,* in driving away thoſe, that bought and ſold in the outward courts of the temple things pertaining to the ſacrifices, was an effect of his great zeal, by which he was pleaſed to make the *Jews* ſenſible of his divine and heavenly authority. From hence we may learn, not to profane the places in which God is worſhipped, either by appearing there irreverently, or by rendering to God a hypocritical ſervice. As for the miracle of the fig-tree that withered away, our Lord did it to ſtrengthen the faith of his diſciples, at a time when he was going to ſuffer death, and to inſtruct them in the virtue and efficacy of faith and prayer.

CHAP. XXI. 23—46.

THIS leſſon conſiſts of three parts: I. *Chriſt*'s anſwer to the Phariſees, who demanded of him an account of his authority. II. The parable of the two ſons whom their father ſent into the vineyard. III. The parable of the huſbandmen, who, after they had killed their maſter's ſervants, did likewiſe ſlay his ſon.

REFLEC-

REFLECTIONS.

WE muſt obſerve, in the firſt place, that when the Phariſees aſked our Lord, from whence he derived his authority, he would not anſwer them directly, but was pleaſed to ſtop their mouths by aſking them, what they thought of the baptiſm of *John*; by which he would convince them of a voluntary and malicious ignorance, and at the ſame time make them ſenſible that his authority proceeded from God, as well as that of *John* the Baptiſt, his forerunner. As for us, by whom this authority is perfectly underſtood, and who know that the doctrine of *Jeſus Chriſt*, as well as that of *John* the Baptiſt, is divine, we ought to ſubmit ourſelves thereto, leſt our incredulity expoſe us to greater condemnation than the Phariſees. The parable of the two ſons, ſignifies, that thoſe people who were looked upon as the moſt corrupt and vicious, had believed the preaching of *John* the Baptiſt ſooner than the Phariſees and the chief men of the *Jews*, who, profeſſing to be more learned and more holy than other men, ought to have been the firſt in receiving it. This parable is applicable to ſinners, who repenting truly of their ſins, return to their duty; and to bad Chriſtians, who, having engaged to ſerve God, and to obey him, break their promiſes, and do not anſwer to their calling. The ſimilitude of the huſbandmen denotes three things: Firſt, the favours that God had ſhewn the *Jews* in chooſing them for his people, and in ſending to them his ſervants at ſeveral times, and at laſt his own Son. Secondly, The ingratitude and naughtineſs of the *Jews*, who, inſtead of acknowledging theſe favours, had rejected and perſecuted the prophets, and crucified the Lord of life. Thirdly, That God would puniſh the *Jews* by deſtroying them, by taking away his covenant from them, and by calling the Gentiles in their ſtead; and that Chriſt, who had been rejected by the chief of the *Jews*, ſhould be exalted to the higheſt glory, as had been foretold by the prophecy in the CXVIIIth Pſalm.

What

What this parable ſignified, is exactly come to paſs; the *Jews* having been deſtroyed and rejected, the Goſpel preached to the Gentiles, and the kingdom of God eſtabliſhed throughout the world. Thus God deprives of his favour and of his covenant thoſe who do not make a right uſe of them, nor produce the fruits which he expects from them.

CHAP. XXII. 1—22.

CHRIST continues the diſcourſes of the preceding chapter, and propoſes, I. The parable of the marriage. II. He anſwers the Phariſees, when they aſked him, if it was lawful to pay tribute to the emperor.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE meaning of the parable of the marriage is, that the *Jews* had been firſt called to ſalvation by *Jeſus Chriſt*, but that they would reject it, and for that reaſon would be deſtroyed; that afterwards God would offer that favour to the Gentiles; that the Gentiles would receive it, and be admitted into his covenant: but that there would be among thoſe that came into the church, hypocrites, who ſhould likewiſe receive the puniſhment of their crime. All that our Saviour foretold by this ſimilitude has been fulfilled, the divine vengeance having fallen upon the unbelieving *Jews*, and the Gentiles having been called and received into the church; which is an inconteſtible proof of the divinity of the Goſpel, and the certainty of the promiſes contained therein. Let us learn from hence, that God is very gracious to men, when he calls them to ſalvation; and that thoſe who ſlight and do not improve his kind invitation, have reaſon to expect the ſevereſt vengeance. Let us particularly obſerve what was ſaid to the man who ſat down to table without a wedding garment, and was caſt out. God will not only puniſh thoſe who openly reject the Goſpel, but hypocrites alſo, who calling themſelves Chriſtians,

Chriſtians, and living in the external communion of the church, without being clothed with ſincere faith and true holineſs, ſhall not eſcape the puniſhment due to their hypocriſy. Thoſe who aſked our Lord, whether it was lawful to give tribute unto *Cæſar*, deſigned by this queſtion, either to render him odious to the people, if he ſaid it was their duty to pay tribute, or to accuſe him to *Pilate*, if he anſwered, no. Our Lord's reply to this captious queſtion, is an argument of his profound wiſdom; and teaches us, that our duty to kings and princes, and our duty towards God, are both indiſpenſable, and that they are not oppoſite to each other; but, on the contrary, are perfectly conſiſtent: therefore we ought religiouſly to obſerve them both, ſubmitting to the higheſt powers, and paying them their due, in ſuch manner, nevertheleſs, as not to forget that our duty to God challenges the firſt place, and ought always to be firſt and chiefly regarded

CHAP. XXII. 23—46.

I. THE Sadducees, who denied the reſurrection of the dead, having propoſed to *Chriſt* the caſe of a woman that had ſeven huſbands, and, in order to confound him, having aſked which of the ſeven ſhe would belong to after the reſurrection; our Lord anſwers, that there would be no ſuch thing as marrying in the life to come, and proves from the Scriptures, that the dead ſhould riſe again. II. He anſwers a queſtion put to him by a ſcribe, about the greateſt commandment of the law. III. He aſks the Phariſees, How the Meſſiah was both the Son of *David* and his Lord? which they could not anſwer, and he did not think fit to explain to them.

REFLECTIONS.

IN *Chriſt's* diſcourſe with the Sadducees about the reſurrection, we ought to admire his divine wiſdom, and,

and, at the ſame time, the ſtrength and evidence with which he confounds them, and proves that the dead ſhall riſe again. This paſſage of the Goſpel teaches us clearly two things: Firſt, That nothing is more certain than the reſurrection of the dead; and that thoſe who have been acceptable to God in their life-time, as the patriarchs, are not annihilated by death. This doctrine is the ſupport of our faith and hope. Secondly, What ſhall be the ſtate of the ſaints in glory: Of which *Chriſt* has told us, that the bands of fleſh and blood ſhall not ſubſiſt in the life to come, and that the bleſſed will not be any more ſubject to the wants of the body and neceſſities of this life, but will be like the angels of God. This conſideration ſhould induce us to become ſpiritual men here, and live in great purity, becauſe without this we cannot attain at length to a happy reſurrection. II. *Chriſt* inculcates here another very important doctrine; which is, that the great commandment of the law is, *To love God with all our heart, and our neighbour as ourſelves:* and ſince this is the ſum of all religion, let it be our great care to fix in our hearts this true love of God, and of all men. III. With reſpect to the queſtion which *Chriſt* put to the Phariſees, how the Meſſiah could be at the ſame time the ſon of *David*, and his Lord; it muſt be obſerved, that he only propoſed it to them, to make them ſenſible of their ignorance, particularly in relation to the perſon of the Meſſiah, and to the nature of his kingdom; but that he would not explain it to them, becauſe they would not have comprehended nor believed what he ſhould have ſaid to them; and likewiſe becauſe it was not convenient to ſpeak openly of the glory and dignity of his perſon at that time: but this queſtion is very plain and obvious to us, who know that *Jeſus Chriſt* was the ſon of *David*, as a man, ſince he was deſcended from that king; but that he is *David*'s Lord, and the Lord of all men, as he is the Son of God; God having placed him at his right hand, as king of the world, and of the church, with ſovereign authority over

over all things: let us therefore glory in our obedience and ſubjection to him.

CHAP. XXIII.

OUR Lord ſpeaks againſt the Phariſees and Scribes. He owns all that is good and lawful in their doctrine, and in their miniſtry, but accuſes them of hypocriſy, and affecting a great appearance of holineſs. He ſays, they were filled with pride; that they rejected the Goſpel themſelves, and hindered others from receiving it; he repreſents them as a ſet of covetous, wicked wretches, who made religion and prayer ſubſervient to their intereſt. He takes notice, that their doctrine about oaths was a proof of their impiety and deteſtable avarice; foraſmuch as they taught, that if a man ſwore by the gold, and by the gifts that were offered in the temple and upon the altar, the obligation upon his conſcience was ſtronger than if he had ſworn by the altar, or by the temple itſelf. He adds, that beſides the tithes preſcribe by the law, they gave tithes of herbs, and every thing that grew, which God had not commanded; and that, notwithſtanding this apparent ſtrictneſs, they neglected duties of much greater importance. He further adds, that though their external appearance was holy, their hearts were very corrupt: that they adorned the ſepulchres of the prophets, and at the ſame time perſecuted the ſervants of God unto death. Laſtly, He declares, that they drew upon themſelves, and the whole nation, the moſt dreadful judgments of God; and laments, in the moſt tender manner, the deſtruction of *Jeruſalem*, which was brought to paſs in a few years.

REFLECTIONS.

IT may be obſerved upon this chapter in general, Firſt, That our Lord drawing near his death, did, with a holy liberty, and with an authority nothing leſs than divine, rebuke the Scribes and Phariſees for their wickedneſs and hypocriſy; it being very neceſſary he ſhould

ſhould diſcover to the people what they were. Secondly, The repeated curſes denounced in this diſcourſe againſt hypocrites, ſhould make us look upon hypocriſy as a moſt odious ſin, eſpecially in thoſe who make great profeſſions of piety and zeal. The particular reflections we are to make upon this chapter, are, I. That when the miniſters of religion teach ſound doctrine, but lead ill lives, we muſt not imitate their actions, but ought, nevertheleſs, to hear and obey them when they preach the truth. II. That all the diſciples of *Jeſus Chriſt*, and particularly thoſe to whom the care of the church is entruſted, ought to be wholly free from hypocriſy, ambition and covetouſneſs, if they would not reſemble thoſe Phariſees whom our Lord curſed. III. That they themſelves ought firſt to walk in the way which leads to heaven, and then make others walk in the ſame path, by contributing their utmoſt to the converſion of ſinners, and to the edification of all men. IV. The cenſure which *Chriſt* paſſes upon the doctrine of the Phariſees, and upon the article of ſwearing, ſhews, that an oath ought to be held in great reverence, ſince we thereby appeal to God himſelf; that perjury, and the breach of vows, is a great ſin. V. We here obſerve, that one of thoſe tokens whereby hypocrites are known, is their affecting an outward holineſs, being nice and ſcrupulous in things of little conſequence, and neglecting the moſt important matters of religion; ſuch as faith, mercy, and obedience to God's commands. Therefore we ought chiefly to apply ourſelves to the obſervation of thoſe moſt eſſential duties, to purify our hearts, and to ſettle in them faith and a true fear of God. Nevertheleſs, we are likewiſe taught by our Saviour, that although external duties be not the moſt neceſſary, yet we muſt not omit nor deſpiſe them; when he ſays, theſe things ought you to have done, and not leave the other undone. The threatenings which *Chriſt* denounces againſt the *Jews*, who, after having murdered the prophets, would put him to death likewiſe, ſhews, that God juſtly deſtroyed them, and that the ingra-

ingratitude of ſuch as reject the word of God and of his ſervants, will not remain unpuniſhed. Laſtly, The tenderneſs with which our Saviour deplores the ruin of the *Jews*, that had made ſuch ill returns to his goodneſs, proves very clearly that God only deſires the ſalvation of men; and that if there are any who periſh, it is wholly through their own fault.

CHAP. XXIV.

OUR Lord foretels the deſtruction of the temple of *Jeruſalem*; and being aſked by his diſciples when it would happen, and what ſigns ſhould precede that deſtruction, and the end of the world, anſwers them, that there ſhould ariſe falſe chriſts and falſe prophets; that there would be wars, famine, and calamities of all kinds; that his diſciples would be perſecuted, and that the Goſpel would be preached in ſeveral parts of the world. He ſays, moreover, that when the abomination of deſolation ſhould come into the holy place, that is, when the idolators ſhould enter *Judea*, and beſiege *Jeruſalem* and the temple, this would be a ſign that its deſtruction was near; and that then people ſhould retire and flee away from the miſeries which would fall at that time upon the *Jewiſh* nation. To this our Lord adds, that the ſun and the ſtars ſhould be darkened; which are figurative expreſſions taken from the prophets, denoting the great revolutions that would happen in the world, and in the ſtate of the *Jews*, and the dreadful marks of God's wrath that would be ſeen by all. He ſays alſo, that the ſign of the Son of Man ſhould appear; which ſignifies, that *Chriſt* would manifeſt, in an illuſtrious and tranſcendent manner, by deſtroying the *Jews*, and eſtabliſhing his kingdom, that he was the Son of God. He declares, that all theſe things ſhould come to paſs before that generation was paſſed away; that the exact time of his coming ſhould be known to none, but ſhould come ſuddenly upon them, as the flood did upon men in the days of *Noah*. Laſtly, he exhorts his diſciples to watch, and

be always ready, leſt he ſhould come upon them unawares.

REFLECTIONS.

WE muſt conſider, in the firſt place, that all that *Chriſt* foretold here, concerning the deſtruction of *Jeruſalem*, came to paſs ſoon after his aſcenſion. For there did ariſe ſeveral falſe meſſiahs and ſeveral impoſtors, who, under the pretence of religious zeal, ſeduced the *Jews*, and ſtirred up ſeditions through all *Judea*. There were likewiſe wars, in which an infinite number of the *Jews* were deſtroyed, and abundance of them carried off by famine and peſtilence: the Apoſtles and Chriſtians were perſecuted; the Goſpel was preached and eſtabliſhed in ſeveral countries; the *Romans* entered *Judea*, beſieged *Jeruſalem*, and demoliſhed it with its temple; and the Chriſtians, making uſe of our Saviour's warning, retired from that city and were ſaved, whilſt the *Jews* periſhed miſerably. All this happened, as *Jeſus Chriſt* had expreſsly declared it would, before that generation of men was gone, about forty years after his death: which is an unanſwerable proof of the truth and divinity of theſe predictions, which were made known to the world long before the deſtruction of *Jeruſalem*. We ſee, in the deſtruction of *Jeruſalem*, a remarkable inſtance of the judgments of God upon unbelievers, as well as of his protection of the faithful. Finally, The exact completion of what our Lord foretold of the deſtruction of *Jeruſalem*, ought to convince us, that what he has ſo expreſsly ſaid of the end of the world, and of the final deſtruction of the wicked, will be fulfilled in like manner. The time of this ſecond coming is concealed from us, as well as that of our own death, that we might be continually prepared for it, and that terrible day may not ſurpriſe us, as the deluge did mankind in the time of *Noah*, nor as the *Jews* were ſurpriſed at the deſtruction of *Jeruſalem*. *Chriſt* ſhews us himſelf, that this is the uſe we are to make of his

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whole diſcourſe, by the ſimilitude of the good and bad ſervant; and by the exhortation denoting the end of that ſimilitude, and of all that is contained in this chapter: *Watch therefore, for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.*

CHAP. XXV.

OUR Lord, after ſpeaking in the foregoing chapter of his coming, and exhorting his diſciples to watchfulneſs, continues his diſcourſe, and ſhews, I. By the parable of the ten virgins; and, II. By that of the talents, the neceſſity of watching, and of preparing for his coming. He afterwards ſpeaks of the laſt judgment.

REFLECTIONS.

THE parable of the virgins is taken from the practice of the *Jews* at their weddings, at which their maidens were uſed to meet the bridegroom and bride with lighted lamps: and by this parable *Chriſt* gave his diſciples to underſtand, that they were continually to expect and be prepared for his coming. The wiſe virgins repreſent the true believers, that live in faith, and in the practice of their duty, and in the expectation of our Lord's coming; and the fooliſh virgins repreſent the falſe Chriſtians, who neglect their duty. The coming of the bridegroom, at midnight, and the condition the wiſe and fooliſh virgins were in, ſignifies, that *Chriſt* will come to judge the world when he is leaſt expected; and that then thoſe that ſhall be found ready will be filled with joy, and with a holy confidence, and ſhall enter with him into his glory; whilſt, on the other hand, thoſe who have neglected to prepare themſelves, ſhall have for their portion nothing but miſery and deſpair, and will in vain attempt to be admitted to the joys of the righteous. We may obſerve three things upon the parable of the talents: Firſt, That God calls men to ſerve him, and that he grants his grace and his gifts to ſome more, to others leſs;

leſs; that each of them may employ them according to his calling, and the meaſure he has received, to the glory of God and the ſalvation of men. Secondly, That ſome, like the faithful ſervants, make a good uſe of theſe gifts and graces; and that others render them uſeleſs by their negligence. Thirdly, That God will oblige both to render an account of their behaviour; that he will praiſe and reward the fidelity of thoſe that have employed his gifts in promoting his glory, and that thoſe who have abuſed them, ſhall be puniſhed for their unbelief. Our Lord expreſsly declares, that theſe laſt will be without excuſe, becauſe God is not a hard and unjuſt maſter, who would reap where he has not ſowed; that is, he never requires of men more than they are able to perform. Thus, by each of theſe parables, *Chriſt* teaches us after what matter he will judge thoſe men, to whom he has given the knowledge of himſelf: he warns us to adhere to our duty with conſtancy, and that each of us ſerve him in our reſpective vocations. There are four things principally to be obſerved in the deſcription of the laſt judgment. The firſt is, that *Jeſus Chriſt* will deſcend from heaven with glory, and that it is he who ſhall judge the world. Secondly, That all men ſhall appear before him, and all be judged by him, without exception. The third is, That he will judge them by their works, and that he will chiefly have reſpect to works of charity, and to the good that is done to his members; becauſe ſuch works are proofs and effects of faith, and of the love we have for him. The fourth thing is, that he will ſeparate the good from the wicked, by receiving the good into the kingdom of heaven, and caſting the wicked into eternal torments. Since *Chriſt* has ſo expreſsly warned us of all theſe things, and ſince we know that we muſt all appear before his tribunal, to receive according to the good or evil we have done, let us behave ourſelves with godlineſs and fear during the time of our abode in this world; let us adhere to the practice of good works, and above all, to thoſe of mercy and charity; that at the day of the laſt and

glorious appearance of the Son of God, we may be free from that terror and deſpair which will then fall upon the wicked, and appear before him with joy and confidence, and be of the number of thoſe to whom he ſhall ſay; *Come, ye bleſſed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.*

CHAP. XXVI. 1—35.

HERE begins the hiſtory of our Saviour's paſſion; I. The prieſts form a reſolution to put *Chriſt* to death. II. A woman anoints our Lord with a precious oil. III. *Judas* bargains with the prieſts to deliver up his maſter to them. And. IV. *Chriſt* celebrates the paſſover, and during that repaſt, he makes mention of the treachery of *Judas*; inſtitutes the Holy Supper, and foretels that St. *Peter* ſhould deny him.

REFLECTIONS.

THE firſt reflection we are to make here, relates to the time of our Lord's paſſion; I. *Jeſus* knowing he was to be crucified at the feaſt of the paſſover, repaired to *Jeruſalem* at that time; and though the prieſts did not intend to put him to death during that feſtival, yet it was the will of God that he ſhould then die, becauſe it was the time of offering up the paſchal lamb, which was the type of our Lord's ſacrifice; and that the *Jews*, who came from all parts upon that account, might be witneſſes of his death. II. The example of that woman, who anointed him with a precious perfume, ſhould excite us to honour our Lord in the beſt manner we are able: and what our Lord ſays in defence of this action, ſhews us, that he accepts of what we do to teſtify our love and our reſpect for him; this ought likewiſe to induce us to judge favourably of other men's actions, eſpecially when proceeding from a good principle; and never neglect to aſſiſt thoſe that are in need and neceſſity. III. The agreement of *Judas* with the prieſts, is a proof what crimes,

crimes, and what obdurateneſs, avarice will lead men into, and how careful we ought to be, that that paſſion do not ſteal into and root itſelf in our hearts. IV. Let it be obſerved, that *Jeſus Chriſt* foretold the treachery of *Judas*, to make him ſenſible his deſign was known to him, and that his diſciples might confeſs, that nothing could befal him but what he had foreſeen, and was contented to expoſe himſelf to. V. What eſpecially deſerves our attention in this chapter, is the Lord's Supper, which our Saviour, juſt before his crucifixion, inſtituted to be a memorial of his death and ſufferings to the end of the world: this obliges us to hold that ſacrament in great reverence, and to celebrate it in a manner conformable to the deſign of our bleſſed Redeemer. VI. *Chriſt*'s prediction, that St. *Peter* ſhould deny him, proves, that our Lord ſees the heart, and knows things to come; and what he ſaid to that apoſtle, who anſwered him with ſo much aſſurance, ſhould teach us, never to preſume upon our own ſtrength, but to diſtruſt ourſelves, and be continually upon our guard againſt temptation.

CHAP. XXVI. 36—75.

IN this part of the hiſtory of the paſſion we ſee, I. What our Lord ſuffered in the garden. II. How he was taken by *Judas*. III. What happened when he appeared before the council, and was condemned. IV. St. *Peter*'s fall and repentance.

REFLECTIONS.

WE ought moſt ſeriouſly to reflect upon what *Chriſt* ſuffered in the garden, and eſpecially the extreme ſorrow and terrors which he then felt. It was the will of God that he ſhould undergo theſe things, that it might appear he died for the ſins of mankind, and was ſubject to all the innocent infirmities of our nature. And we ought to judge, by the condition to which our Saviour was then reduced, how great the horror of ſin is, and how dreadful the puniſhments are

which wicked men will one day ſuffer. Thoſe humble and fervent prayers which *Chriſt* made to God in his agony, teach us to pray with perſeverance and ſubmiſſion, when we are in affliction. The reſignation of our Lord to the will of his Father, is a proof of his perfect obedience to him, and of his love towards us, and ought to be a pattern to us, in what condition ſoever he thinks fit to place us. The warning that *Chriſt* gave his apoſtles to watch and pray, leſt they ſhould ſink under that great temptation to which they were going to be expoſed, is a moſt wholeſome advice, ſerving to teach us, that watchfulneſs and prayer are the principal means to reſiſt temptation, and that we are overcome by it when we neglect thoſe means. In the manner in which *Judas* betrayed our Lord, we may ſee on one hand the treachery of that wretched diſciple, and on the other, the readineſs and chearfulneſs with which *Chriſt* expoſed himſelf to death. The action of St. *Peter*, who ſmote with his ſword one of thoſe who came to apprehend *Chriſt* is to be conſidered as the effect of a raſh zeal; and the rebuke that our Saviour gave that apoſtle, is a leſſon to us never to avenge ourſelves, nor proceed to violence upon any occaſion whatever. That which is to be obſerved upon the appearance of *Chriſt* before the council of the *Jews*, is, I. That notwithſtanding all the endeavours of the *Jews* to find out falſe witneſſes, and ſome pretended reaſon for condemning him, he could not be convicted of any crime, and was only condemned for acknowledging himſelf to be the Son of God. In this we diſcover the malice and injuſtice of the *Jews*, and the intire innocence of our Saviour. II. The great patience with which he ſuffered all the injuries and affronts, and all the unjuſt treatments which he received from them, ſhould cauſe us to remember what St. *Peter* ſaid upon this occaſion: That *Chriſt ſuffered for us, leaving us an example, that we ſhould follow his ſteps*, 1 Peter ii. 21. III. What our Lord said to the *Jews*, when they condemned him to death, namely, that they ſhould ſee him coming in the clouds of heaven,

heaven, deſerves a particular attention. Here we may obſerve *Jeſus Chriſt* ſpeaking as a king, and as the Son of God, at the very time of his condemnation: and the eſtabliſhment of his kingdom, as well as the deſtruction of the *Jews*, did ſoon after verify what he had foretold upon that occaſion. IV. The fall of St. *Peter*, who, after having been warned by our Lord, and after having proteſted that he would never renounce him, did yet deny him three times, even with imprecations and oaths, is a ſad inſtance of human inconſtancy and frailty. By which we ſee, that even thoſe who have good intentions may greatly fall, when they are not fortified againſt temptation; and that to ſecure ourſelves from it, it behoves us to ſtand upon our guard and to ſuſpect ourſelves; to pray without ceaſing, and to ſhun the places, and avoid the occaſions that may draw us into ſin. But we muſt likewiſe conſider, that if the fall of St. *Peter* was great, his repentance was ſpeedy, and that he bitterly bewailed his fault. So we, when we happen to fall, ought to riſe quickly, and atone for our ſin by the tears of a ſincere repentance, and by a true amendment of our lives.

CHAP. XXVII. 1—26.

I, *JUDAS*, ſeeing that *Chriſt* was condemned, acknowledged his crime, and laid violent hands upon himſelf. II. *Jeſus* appeared before *Pilate*, the governor of *Jeruſalem*, who, after having made ſeveral attempts to deliver him, and to pacify the *Jews*, did at laſt pronounce the ſentence of his condemnation.

REFLECTIONS.

THE remorſe of conſcience *Judas* felt, when he ſaw they were going to put *Jeſus* to death, the confeſſion he made of his crime, and his tragical end, ſhew the innocence of our Lord, and how unjuſtly he was condemned. It likewiſe diſcovers the ſtate of a guilty conſcience, and the horror of that remorſe

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and deſpair wherewith the wicked are tormented when they become ſenſible of their crimes, and are purſued by divine vengeance. The uſe to which the *Jews* put the money that *Judas* returned them, ſerved to perpetuate the memory of this event, as it was a proof of the injuſtice which they had committed, and as it was a plain accompliſhment of the prophecy of *Zechariah*. As to what happened before *Pilate*, it muſt be obſerved, that *Chriſt* owned in his preſence, as he had already done before the council, that he was the Meſſiah. Thus in imitation of our Lord, we ought to confeſs the truth, even at the peril of our lives, as often as we are called to it. We ſee, moreover, in this hiſtory, the rage of the *Jews*, which nothing was capable of mollifying, and how they preferred a murderer and a ſeditious perſon before *Jeſus Chriſt*; the innocence of our Lord may alſo be here obſerved, ſince it was acknowledged by *Pilate* himſelf; and particularly the iniquity of that judge, who, after a long oppoſition, did yield to his death at laſt, notwithſtanding the warning he received from his wife, and though he was perſuaded that he was condemning an innocent man. We have therefore an example in *Pilate* of thoſe that ſin againſt light, and that ſacrifice their duty and their conſcience to fear, complaiſance and intereſt; as well as thoſe that think themſelves guiltleſs when they are committing the greateſt crimes, and that throw upon others the faults which they themſelves are the authors of. This teaches us to adhere always inviolably to our duty, and to purſue with courage and ſteadineſs the motions of our own conſcience, without ſuffering any conſideration whatever to turn us aſide. Laſtly, We ought moſt ſeriouſly to reflect upon theſe words of the *Jews*, when our Lord was condemned, *His blood be on us, and on our children.* Both they and their poſterity have found the effects of this imprecation which they made againſt themſelves; God having revenged the death of his Son upon that guilty nation, by the deſtruction of their city, and by that miſerable condition in which they have remained ever ſince.

CHAP. XXVII. 27—66.

ST. *Matthew* here relates, I. The crucifixion and death of *Jeſus Chriſt*. II. The wonderful things that then happened. III. His burial.

REFLECTIONS.

AFTER having heard the relation of our Saviour's paſſion, and ſeen what contempt and pain he was expoſed to before his crucifixion, and whilſt he was upon the croſs, we ought to conſider, that he ſuffered all theſe things for the expiation of our ſins, and to confirm, by his death, the promiſes he had made us of life everlaſting. The uſe we are to make of this important paſſage of the Goſpel, is to conſider that death as the wonderful means whereby God has ſaved us; to praiſe his mercy in delivering up his Son to death, and the love of our gracious Saviour in giving himſelf for us, and to love him as he has loved us. The ſufferings of *Chriſt* ought likewiſe to make us renounce ſin, ſince he died to deſtroy it; and teach us alſo to ſuffer, and to bear our croſs with patience. The ſeveral prodigies that happened at his death, betoken the horror of the crime the *Jews* had then committed in crucifying him, and ſhew that *Jeſus Chriſt* was the Son of God. The rending of the vale of the temple, viſibly denotes, that the worſhip of the *Jews* was drawing to an end, and their temple going to be deſtroyed, and that heaven ſhould thenceforwards be open to men. The opening of the ſepulchres of thoſe who roſe with our Lord, denoted, that *Jeſus* ſhould come out of his tomb, and that the dead ſhould riſe at the laſt day, by the efficacy of his death and reſurrection. With reſpect to the burial of our Lord, we may conſider, that he was interred, that people might be more fully ſatisfied that he was really dead; and God was pleaſed he ſhould be put into a ſepulchre where none had yet lain, to ſhew, that it was he himſelf that aroſe from thence. The circumſtances of his burial, as well as

thoſe of his paſſion, are the completion of ſeveral prophecies. And the belief that *Chriſt* was buried, is very proper to remove the horror which we ſhould otherwiſe have conceived of our own death and burial, and to fill us with the hope of the reſurrection and of a better life. Laſtly, The *Jews* cauſing our Lord's ſepulchre to be ſo ſtrictly cloſed and watched, is a thing worthy our notice, becauſe, contrary to their own intentions, they furniſh us thereby with undeniable proof of his reſurrection.

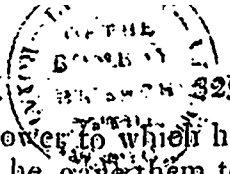
CHAP. XXVIII.

THIS laſt chapter of the Goſpel of St. *Matthew* contains, I. A ſhort account of the reſurrection of *Jeſus Chriſt*. II. What that *Jews* did to perſuade the people that his diſciples had taken away his body. III. *Chriſt*'s appearing to the apoſtles, and the directions he gave them before he aſcended into heaven.

REFLECTIONS.

THERE are three principal reflections to be made upon the reſurrection of *Jeſus Chriſt*: I. That God's ſending his angels to take him out of the ſepulchre, as he had foretold, is an undeniable proof that he is the Son of God. II. That that reſurrection was a certain fact, atteſted by angels, and by the women that ſaw our Saviour, and afterwards by the apoſtles, and by a great number of other perſons. III. And above all that the reſurrection is the foundation of our ſalvation, and of all our hopes, ſince we are hereby fully aſſured, that we are reconciled to God, and that we ſhall riſe again at the laſt day. What the chief men among the *Jews* did to perſuade the people that *Chriſt*'s diſciples had taken away his body, diſcovers the extreme malice and invincible obſtinacy of his enemies; but all their precautions were vain, and what they feared did not fail to happen: thus God confounds the wicked in their deſigns, and makes truth triumph over all oppoſition. Laſtly, What our Saviour

ſaid



ſaid to his apoſtles, of the ſupreme power to which he was going to be exalted, the orders he gave them to preach and to baptiſe, and the promiſe he made of being with them to the end of the world, ought all to be ſeriouſly conſidered. *Chriſt* ſpoke then to his diſciples, as Lord of heaven and earth, and ſhewed plainly that his doctrine was going to be ſpread over all the earth, that a great many people would embrace it and be baptiſed, and that his church ſhould ſubſiſt for ever. The ſpeedy and wonderful ſucceſs of the preaching of the apoſtles, and the eſtabliſhment of the Chriſtian religion, proved afterwards, and does ſtill prove the truth of theſe laſt words of our Lord; and they are ſo many powerful motives to induce us to believe in him, to confeſs the divinity of his doctrine, and to do all he has commanded us; particularly, to look upon baptiſm as a ſacred inſtitution of our Saviour, and to reverence that holy ceremony by which we are conſecrated to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt.

The end of the Goſpel according to St. MATTHEW.

THE

THE

GOSPEL

ACCORDING TO

ST. MARK.

ARGUMENT.

This Goſpel was written ſome time after that of St. Matthew, *it is thought, about ten years after* Chriſt's *aſcenſion, by St.* Mark, *under the inſpection of the apoſtle St.* Peter.

CHAP. I.

IN this chapter St. *Mark* gives a ſhort account of *John* the Baptiſt's preaching the baptiſm of *Jeſus Chriſt*, his temptation, his firſt preaching in *Galilee*, and the calling of his apoſtles. He afterwards relates the cure of a man poſſeſſed with an unclean ſpirit, of St. *Peter*'s mother-in-law, and of ſeveral other ſick and diſeaſed, and laſtly of a leper.

REFLEC-

REFLECTIONS *after reading the chapter.*

ST. *Mark* ſhews us in the beginning of his Goſpel, I. That *John* the Baptiſt was ſent, as had been foretold of him by the prophets, to declare the manifeſtation of the kingdom of God, by preaching repentance, by baptiſing thoſe that confeſſed their ſins, and by warning the people that the Meſſiah was going to appear. God was pleaſed by the miniſtry of *John* to prepare the *Jews* for the reception of *Jeſus Chriſt*, and to teach them that the kingdom of the Meſſiah would be a ſpiritual kingdom, and that he came to eſtabliſh holineſs in the world, and to turn men to God; ſo that we ought to look upon repentance and holineſs of life, as the deſign of our Lord's coming: and this is what he himſelf has taught us, having begun his miniſtry by preaching repentance, as *John* the Baptiſt his forerunner had done; ſaying, *Repent ye, and believe the Goſpel.* II. What happened at the baptiſm of *Jeſus Chriſt*, viz. the deſcending of the Holy Ghoſt, and the voice which God cauſed to be heard from heaven, tended to convince *John* the Baptiſt, and the people, that *Jeſus* was the Son of God, whoſe doctrine all men were to receive with obedience and faith. It was likewiſe to ſhew, that he was really the Son of God, and to convince the devil of this truth, that God was pleaſed to ſuffer him to be tempted in the deſart. III. The choice which our Lord made of ſome fiſhermen to be his apoſtles, ſhews that he came not to eſtabliſh a temporal and worldly kingdom, ſince thoſe people had nothing to diſtinguiſh themſelves in this world: this likewiſe proves, that the wonderful effects of their miniſtry proceeded not from them, but that the whole glory is to be attributed to God alone. IV. Our Lord ſoon made himſelf known by miracles, which manifeſted not only his infinite power, but his great goodneſs alſo. This method providence made choice of to prove to the *Jews* that he was ſent from God, and that his doctrine was true and divine; and to convince men ſtill more of this truth,

truth, was the reaſon why he worked his miracles, commonly, in favour only of ſuch who believed that he was able to do them, and who deſired it of him. He nevertheleſs took all the care he could, that thoſe miracles ſhould not make too great a noiſe: this he did upon prudential reaſons, leſt thoſe among the *Jews* that owned him for the Meſſiah, ſhould have raiſed commotions and tumults in order to declare him king, according to their notion at that time, that the Meſſiah ſhould be a temporal king; which might have occaſioned ſome diſturbance, and engaged the *Romans* to oppoſe the diſciples of *Chriſt*. Laſtly, When we read the account all of theſe miracles, we ſhould reflect, that ſince our Saviour is not leſs powerful, nor leſs gracious now, than he was when upon earth, he will grant us what is neceſſary to the healing or ſaving of our ſouls, more certainly than he formerly granted a cure to the diſeaſes of the body.

CHAP. II.

I. *CHRIST* cures a paralytical perſon. II. Calls *Levi*, which is St. *Matthew*, to the office of an apoſtle. III. He gives his reaſons why he eat with ſinners, and why he did not oblige his diſciples to obſerve regular faſts, like thoſe of *John* the Baptiſt, and of the Phariſees. IV. He returns an anſwer to the Phariſees, who blamed his apoſtles for plucking the ears of corn upon the Sabbath-day.

REFLECTIONS.

THE firſt thing to be obſerved in the cure of the man that had the palſy is, the faith of thoſe who brought the man to *Jeſus*; who, when they ſaw they could not come near our Lord, let the ſick man down through the roof of the houſe before *Jeſus*; who, ſeeing this ſurpriſing inſtance of their faith, wrought for them the miracle which they believed he was able to perform. From whence it appears, how agreeable faith is to our Saviour, and how efficacious in obtaining

ing from him the mercies we ſtand in need of. It appears alſo from hence, that beſides the power of healing diſtempers, *Chriſt* had alſo an authority to forgive ſins, which obliges us to conſider him, not only as a prophet ſent from God, but likewiſe as our judge, from whom we may expect health to our ſouls, and pardon of our offences through faith and repentance. II. We learn from this chapter, that our Lord came into the world to call ſinners to repentance, which he gave us to underſtand by eating with publicans, and ſuch other perſons as the *Jews* looked upon to be great ſinners. This doctrine ought to fill us with confidence, and at the ſame time make us acknowledge, that it is abſolutely neceſſary to repent and amend our lives, if we would be ſaved. III. When it is ſaid, that *Chriſt* did not oblige his diſciples to regular faſts, ſuch as thoſe obſerved by the diſciples of *John* the Baptiſt, it muſt be underſtood in this manner, namely, that our Lord had particular reaſons for not confining his diſciples at that time to thoſe kinds of faſts; becauſe both he and his diſciples were continually moving from place to place, and converſing with all kinds of people. He declared, however, that his diſciples ſhould be called, after he was taken from them, not only to faſtings but to great ſufferings; and that if they were not yet expoſed to them, it was becauſe they were not able to bear them; juſt as a piece of new cloth would not ſuit with an old garment, and new wine would break old bottles. Therefore we muſt not conclude from this paſſage of the Goſpel, that our Saviour condemned faſting and mortification; on the contrary, this doctrine evidently ſuppoſes, that our Lord calls his diſciples to a mortified life, and to bear their croſs. IV. We ſee, laſtly, that *Chriſt* juſtifies the action of his diſciples, who, being very hungry, plucked the ears of corn upon the Sabbath-day, upon which occaſion he quoted what *David* did in a like caſe. This teaches us, that in extreme neceſſity, and when the external duties of religion cannot be obſerved without great inconvenience, they may be diſpenſed

penſed with: provided it be not out of contempt, and that we never violate the eſſentials of religion; it being nothing but hypocriſy and ſuperſtition, like that of the Phariſees, to act otherwiſe.

CHAP. III.

THE evangeliſt relates, I. The healing of a man whoſe hand was withered, and of ſeveral other diſeaſed perſons. II. The calling of the twelve apoſtles. III. What *Chriſt* ſaid to the Phariſees, who aſcribed his miracles to the power of the devil. IV. His declaration, that his true diſciples were as dear to him as his own kindred.

REFLECTIONS.

I. WE may ſtill obſerve the great goodneſs and ſovereign power of our Lord, in the ſeveral miracles mentioned in this chapter, which is very proper to confirm our faith, and to fill us with confidence in him. We ſee, in particular, in the cure wrought upon the man whoſe hand was withered, the great blindneſs and malice of the Phariſees, who were offended at *Chriſt*'s doing this upon the Sabbath-day. What he ſays to thoſe enemies of his doctrine, and the juſt indignation he expreſſed, ſhews us, how much he is offended when we reſiſt the truth, and, under a pretence of religion, condemn works of piety and charity. II. The choice our Lord made of the twelve apoſtles to be with him, and the power he gave them to preach the Goſpel, and to work miracles, like thoſe done by himſelf, muſt be looked upon as an effect of his great wiſdom, as well as of his goodneſs towards all men, ſince he was afterwards to make uſe of the miniſtry of thoſe apoſtles, to cauſe the Goſpel to be preached throughout the world. III. The third reflection relates to the ſin of the Phariſees, whom *Chriſt* accuſes of blaſpheming againſt the Holy Ghoſt. St. *Mark* clearly explains wherein this blaſphemy conſiſted: which was, that ſeeing our Lord caſt out devils, they

they ſaid, he did theſe miracles by the power of the devil; which was a moſt heinous inſtance of blaſphemy againſt the Holy Ghoſt, and the mark of an irrecoverable ſtate of wickedneſs. This example proves, that when once men have abandoned themſelves to their prejudices and paſſions, they are hardened againſt all that can be offered to them, though never ſo clear, and never ſo ſtrong? and that inſtead of yielding to evidence, they become yet more wicked. IV. Our Lord's declaring that he loved his true diſciples as much as his neareſt relations, teaches us, that the ſureſt means of being loved by him, is to ſet ourſelves to hear his word, and to do his will; and that we likewiſe, in imitation of him, ought particularly to cheriſh thoſe perſons that fear God, and to eſteem them above all others.

CHAP. IV.

THIS chapter contains, I. The parable of the ſeed, and its explanation. II. Another parable of ſeed caſt into the earth, and at length producing its fruit. III. The parable of the grain of muſtard. IV. Chriſt's miracle in laying the ſtorm.

REFLECTIONS.

THE explanation which *Jeſus Chriſt* himſelf has given of the ſimilitude of the ſeed, ſets it in a clear light, and expreſſes the meaning and uſe of it. This is what the Saviour of the world has thought fit to teach us by it: the ſeed that fell upon the way repreſents thoſe who hear the Goſpel, but do not receive it, nor are affected with it. The ſeed that fell upon rocky places, denotes thoſe who receive the word of God only for a time, but in perſecution and temptation forſake *Chriſt*. The ſeed that fell among thorns, and was thereby choked, is the image of thoſe in whom the word would produce fruit, if their hearts were not taken up with the love of the riches and pleaſures of the world, and with the cares of this life.

And

And the ſeed ſown in good ground, repreſents thoſe who have a good and well-diſpoſed heart, and in whom the Goſpel produces good fruit. Now it is our duty to examine ourſelves, and to try whether we are of the number of thoſe hardened ones, upon whom the word of God makes no impreſſion; or of thoſe inconſtant and cowardly ones, who, after having been affected, do not preſevere; or of thoſe carnal or worldly ones, in whom the word is rendered unprofitable, by the love of the riches and pleaſures of this life; or, laſtly of thoſe faithful hearers, who bring forth in abundance the fruit which God expects from them. Let theſe divine inſtructions take root in our hearts, and, as *Chriſt* himſelf has exhorted us, let us take heed how we receive them, always remembering, that God gives more light and greater gifts to thoſe that make a right uſe of them; but that he takes them away from ſuch as abuſe them, or that do not improve them. The deſign of our Lord in the ſimilitude of the ſeed ſpringing up, and growing by little and little; and in the other, of a grain of muſtard, was to ſhew, that notwithſtanding there was no great appearance at that time that his doctrine ſhould make any conſiderable progreſs, by reaſon of his own low eſtate, and the ſmall number of thoſe who received his doctrine, yet it would ſoon be ſpread throughout the whole earth. *Chriſt* expreſſed theſe things in parables, becauſe he would not then declare openly that his Goſpel was to be preached to other nations, for fear of ſhocking and giving offence to the *Jews*: but theſe parables became very obvious and plain afterwards, by the eſtabliſhment of the Chriſtian Religion, ſo that they do now furniſh us with invincible proofs of the truth of the Goſpel. In the hiſtory of the miracle which our Saviour wrought by calming a tempeſt, we may obſerve the great concern of the apoſtles, who were afraid of periſhing, though *Jeſus* was in the midſt of them; which ſhewed that their faith was ſtill weak, as he himſelf reproached them. We may likewiſe diſcover therein his goodneſs towards them,

them, and that wonderful power which turned their fear into aſtoniſhment and admiration. The children of God are expoſed to many dangers, to many fears and infirmities, but he helpeth them, and after he has tried them by affliction, gives ſuch proofs of his goodneſs in their deliverance, as may ſtrengthen their faith, and fill them with joy and conſolation.

CHAP. V.

I. THE evangeliſt relates a moſt remarkable miracle which our Saviour wrought, by delivering a man poſſeſſed with a legion of devils. II. The healing of a woman that had an iſſue of blood, and the raiſing the daughter of *Jairus* from the dead.

REFLECTIONS.

THE hiſtory of the poſſeſſed with devils, does very much deſerve our attention. We may obſerve here a moſt evident proof of the power which the devils exerciſed at that time, by God's permiſſion, over mankind; but we ſee likewiſe that *Chriſt* had a ſovereign authority over them; that he came to deſtroy the kingdom of the devil, and that he was always ready to diſplay his power in favour of ſuch as wanted his aſſiſtance. Our Lord, after having delivered this demoniack, gave the devils leave to enter into the ſwine, and to hurry them headlong into the ſea, that it might appear that this man was really poſſeſſed, and to prove the truth and greatneſs of the miracle which he had wrought; it was likewiſe to ſhew, that the devils could do nothing but by his permiſſion; and as a trial and chaſtiſement of the inhabitants of thoſe parts, who, as the hiſtory informs us, would not bear our Saviour among them. This obliges us to thank God, that ſince the coming of *Jeſus Chriſt*, the devil has not the ſame power as he had formerly over mankind; and to conſider, that as ſad and deplorable as the condition of this demoniack was, yet it was by no means ſo dreadful as that of ſinners who abandon themſelves

to evil, and who are ſlaves to the devil and their own paſſions; ſince this man did not fall into this ſorrowful condition by his own fault, and that beſides, the devil could only hurt his body, whereas ſinners do, of their own accord, become his ſlaves by performing his will; by which means, this enemy of God and man draws their ſouls into the abyſs of everlaſting deſtruction. The example of that woman whoſe faith our Lord commends, and who was healed by touching the hem of his garment, proves that humility and faith have a great efficacy, that truſt in *Jeſus Chriſt* is never vain, and that he is always ready to extend his favours to thoſe that apply themſelves to him with ſuch diſpoſitions. The great power of our Lord appears yet with more luſtre, in the reſurrection of the daughter of *Jairus*; of which it muſt be obſerved, that *Chriſt* did not only heal the ſick, but that he likewiſe reſtored life to the dead; whereby he did both diſplay his infinite power, and confirm the promiſes which he has made of raiſing us up at the laſt day. Thus the conſideration of this miracle is of very great efficacy to produce in us a firm hope of immortality, to fill us with comfort in the expectation of it, and to encourage us more and more to the ſtudy and practice of piety and good works; that we may one day partake of that bleſſed reſurrection which *Chriſt* has promiſed.

CHAP. VI. 1—29.

WE have here an account, I. Of our Saviour's arrival at *Nazareth*, and of the unbelief of the inhabitants of that town. II. Of the miſſion of the twelve apoſtles into *Judea*. III. Of the death of *John* the Baptiſt.

REFLECTIONS.

THESE are the reflections which we ought to make upon the three forementioned heads: I. The firſt relates to the unbelief and ingratitude of the people of *Nazareth*, who being ſo happy as to have our Saviour among

among them, did not acknowledge that the wiſdom and power which were in him proceeded from God, and made ſo ill a uſe of his preſence, which was the reaſon that he wrought few miracles in that place. Thus the prejudices and wickedneſs of men make them neglect the greateſt advantages, at the time when they are offered to them; it likewiſe ſhews, that if God deprives them of his grace, it is becauſe they are ſo little ſenſible of it, and becauſe they put obſtacles in their own way. Upon the miſſion of the apoſtles it muſt be obſerved, 1. That *Jeſus Chriſt*, in his wiſdom and goodneſs towards the *Jews*, ſent the apoſtles throughout *Judea*, to declare the coming of the kingdom of God; and to render their preaching more effectual, he gave them the power of doing miracles. 2. He forbad them to make any proviſion for that journey, becauſe it was to be but ſhort, and to inure them early to rely upon Providence. 3. He declared, that thoſe who would not receive them, ſhould be puniſhed moſt ſeverely; whereby we ſee the condemnation of thoſe to whom God offers ſalvation, and who reject the proffers of his mercy. As to the death of *John* the Baptiſt, it was owing to the hatred that *Herodias* bore him, becauſe he condemned her marriage with *Herod;* and to the baſe compliance of that prince, who ſacrificed *John* the Baptiſt, for whom he had otherwiſe a veneration, looking upon him as a holy and juſt man, to the reſentment of that impudent woman. In this event we perceive, that vicious perſons commonly hate thoſe who reprove them for their diſorderly lives; and that very great evils ſpring from impurity, as well as from the compliance which people ſhew for the wicked, and from rath oaths. It is nevertheleſs to be noted, that it pleaſed God to ſuffer *John* the Baptiſt to loſe his life after this manner, that the *Jews* might be prepared for that which was to befal our Lord, of whom this holy prophet was the forerunner. It is likewiſe a thing worthy of attention, that *Herod*, who was of the ſect of the Sadducees, who did not believe a reſurrection, ſhould imagine

that *John* the Baptiſt, who had been beheaded by his order, was come to life again; this ſhews that the wicked and unbelievers have no fixed or ſettled notions; that a guilty conſcience is always in fear; and that wicked men, in the horror of their remorſe, acknowledge truths which they before denied, and which are contrary to their avowed ſentiments.

CHAP. VI. 30—56.

I. OUR Lord feeds five thouſand people after a miraculous manner. II. His diſciples being expoſed to a ſtorm, he goes to them walking upon the ſea. III. He cures many diſeaſes after he arrived at the country of *Genezareth*.

REFLECTIONS.

WE are here to obſerve in the firſt place the goodneſs of our Lord, who, ſeeing the condition of the people that followed him, was moved with compaſſion towards them; and beſtowed upon them, beſides ſpiritual food for their ſouls, nouriſhment alſo for their bodies, by a wonderful multiplication of the loaves. There is one circumſtance which particularly diſtinguiſhes this miracle from the reſt: which is, that this miracle was wrought in behalf of a great multitude, whereas the reſt were of a private nature; which muſt make this the more remarkable. He afterwards manifeſted the ſame goodneſs, as well as power, when his diſciples being in danger of periſhing by a tempeſt, he went to them walking upon the ſea, and made the ſtorm to ceaſe. This new miracle it ſeems was neceſſary more fully to convince his diſciples of his power; ſince, as the Evangeliſt remarks, they have not ſufficiently attended to his former miracles. Thus our Lord was pleaſed to confirm their faith, which was ſtill weak, and convince them more and more that he was the Son of God. What happened on this occaſion, ſhould produce in us a firm belief of the unbounded power of Chriſt, and of the care he takes of his ſervants;

vants; there being no danger which he cannot deliver them from, no affliction which has not in the end an happy iſſue, which makes dangers and afflictions the greateſt proofs of his love. Finally, When we read that they brought to *Chriſt*, from all parts, the ſick and diſeaſed, and that they were all healed, even by the bare touch of his garment; we ought to believe, that if he thus diſplayed his power for the comfort and cure of thoſe that were preſented to him, he is not leſs diſpoſed to ſave all ſuch as ſeek from him the cure of their ſouls; and this ſhould encourage us to have recourſe with confidence to our gracious Redeemer, to be aſſiſted by him in all our wants.

CHAP. VII.

THIS chapter has two parts: I. The Phariſees complaining that the diſciples of *Chriſt* did not waſh themſelves according to the cuſtom of the *Jews*, he reproaches them for violating the commandments of God, by teaching, that if a child had conſecrated and devoted to God that ſubſtance wherewith he might have aſſiſted his father and mother, he was obliged ſtrictly to fulfil ſuch a vow, nor was any longer at liberty with that ſubſtance to relieve his parents in their wants. He afterwards teaches the people and his diſciples what it was that defiled a man, and what did not defile him. II. After this he goes to the coaſts of *Tyre* and *Sidon*, and there heals the daughter of a *Canaanitiſh* woman; and returning into *Galilee*, he heals a man that was deaf and dumb.

REFLECTIONS.

WE may learn from hence, I. That it is hypocriſy ſcrupulouſly to practiſe ceremonies and cuſtoms eſtabliſhed by men, and to violate the divine laws and duties which God has more expreſsly commanded; that the true ſervice of God conſiſts in keeping his commandments, but that he abhors the worſhip of hypocrites, who pretend to honour him with their mouths,

mouths, and with the outside of religion, whilst their heart is defiled and far from him. II. This discourse of our Saviour teaches us, that it is the will of God that children should honour and assist their parents, and that nothing can excuse them from this duty. III. That those oaths and vows, whereby people oblige themselves to do things contrary to the law of God, do not bind the conscience; and that it would be a sin to perform them. But above all, *Christ* teaches us, IV. That what defiles us before God, is properly that which proceeds from the heart, such as evil thoughts, impure and unjust desires; the hatred of our neighbour; envy, pride, and haughtiness; and other passions of the like nature; that these evil thoughts are real sins, being the source of all the wicked actions that men commit. When *Christ* gave these instructions, he said, *Hear and understand.* This advice denotes the importance of this doctrine, and obliges us above all things to avoid that which defiles the soul, and to acquire true purity, which is that of the heart. On the second part of this chapter it must be observed, that our Lord being desired by a woman that was a Gentile to heal her daughter, refused at first to grant her request, telling her, it was not fit to give the childrens bread to dogs; that is, to work those miracles in favour of the Gentiles, who are strangers, which *Christ* only did for the sake of the *Jews*, that were the people of God, and as it were the children of his family. Our Lord said this, because the Gentiles were not yet to be made equal to the *Jews*. But that woman obtained at last from him, by her profound humility, perseverance, faith, and zeal, the favour which she desired of him. We may see by this history, that the heathens were not excluded from the grace of God, and that they were to be soon received into it, as well as the *Jews*. We see likewise that prayers, attended with humility and zeal, have great efficacy; that if they do not obtain for us at first all that we desire of God, he deals thus with us, to stir us up, and to give us more lively sentiments of our own unworthiness, but

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that at laſt we obtain every thing of him by perſeverance. Finally, We diſcover in this, and the other miracle of healing the deaf and dumb man, the facility and ſupreme authority wherewith *Chriſt* cured all ſorts of diſeaſes, and that great charity which induced him, upon all occaſions, to comfort and aſſiſt the miſerable, and to do good to all.

CHAP. VIII. 1—21.

I. *CHRIST* feeds miraculouſly four thouſand men. II. He refuſes to give a ſign, which the Phariſees required of him. And, III. Warns his diſciples to beware of the leaven of the Phariſees, and of the leaven of *Herod.*

REFLECTIONS.

I. WE are here to admire the wonderful and gracious manner in which our Lord fed ſeveral thouſand men with ſeven loaves and a few fiſhes, as he had done a little before; whereby he was pleaſed not only to provide for the nouriſhment of their bodies, but likewiſe to diſpoſe them to receive from him the true food, which is that of the ſoul. Further, The great multitude for whom our Lord multiplied the loaves and fiſhes, and the broken pieces that remained, with which the apoſtles filled ſeven baſkets, are two circumſtances which ſerved to confirm the certainty of the miracle, and make it known. II. We ſee that the Phariſees having deſired our Saviour to ſhew them a ſign from heaven, he would not gratify them in it. His uſing them in that manner was very juſt, ſince having already done ſo many other miracles, which they had made no advantage of, ſuch a ſign could have been of no uſe to them, nor would they have been affected with it. God, who anſwers the deſires of the ſincere and honeſt heart, juſtly forſakes thoſe who reſiſt the truth; and when he has done enough to convince men, he is not bound to do any more; and it would be in vain for him to employ new means to convince men whoſe blind-

blindneſs is voluntary, and the effect of their wickedneſs. III. The apoſtles having forgot to take bread, our Lord warns them againſt the leaven of the Phariſees and the leaven of *Herod*, who was of the ſect of the Sadducees; this was as much as to ſay, that they ſhould beware of the doctrine of the Phariſees, who were hypocrites, and only adhered to the traditions and externals of religion; and the impious opinions of the Sadducees that denied the reſurrection, and maintained other pernicious errors. Thus did this Divine Saviour, in his great wiſdom, take occaſion from ordinary occurrences to give his diſciples wholeſome leſſons of inſtruction. What he ſays at this time teaches us to avoid, with the utmoſt care, all kind of falſe doctrines and dangerous notions, and eſpecially ſuch as may lead us into ſuperſtition and hypocriſy, or into irreligion and infidelity.

CHAP. VIII. 22—38.

I. *CHRIST* cures a blind man. II. He aſks his diſciples what opinion the people had of him, and what they themſelves thought of him; whereupon St. *Peter* confeſſed him to be the Son of God. III. Our Lord foretels his death. IV. He exhorts his diſciples to be prepared for ſufferings, and to make an open profeſſion of the Goſpel before men; and to engage them to it, he ſhews them that it was the only means to avoid the loſs of their ſouls.

REFLECTIONS.

I. IN the healing of the blind man there is this particular obſervable, viz. That our Lord did not heal him all at once, but did it by degrees. He proceeded in that manner to try his faith, which was not perhaps ſtrong enough; to demonſtrate his power to him in a more ſenſible manner by the progreſs of his cure, and to let the people ſee, that in not working his miracles after the ſame manner always, he could diſplay the divine power that was in him, either all at once, or by

little and little; which ſhews that he was able to work miracles as he thought convenient. II. We ſee in the ſecond place, that *Chriſt* was eſteemed among the *Jews* as a great prophet, but that St. *Peter*, and the other apoſtles, looked upon him as the Son of God. This is likewiſe what all of us ought to believe in our heart, and confeſs with our mouth, if we would be ſaved. Nevertheleſs, our Lord forbids his diſciples to publiſh that he was the Meſſiah, becauſe he was not to take upon him openly that character before his death. III. Upon the prediction which *Chriſt* made of his own death, it is to be obſerved, that he warned his diſciples of it, that they might be prepared gradually for that great event which they did not expect, and which might otherwiſe have ſtaggered their faith. It was to make them underſtand the neceſſity of this, that he ſo ſeverely rebuked St. *Peter*, who, being poſſeſſed with the *Jewiſh* prejudices, could not conceive that the Meſſiah, the Son of God, was to die. But what this apoſtle could not comprehend at that time, is plain to us, who know that the death of *Chriſt* is the means that God has been pleaſed to uſe for our redemption. IV. And laſtly, *Chriſt* has taught us, that thoſe who would be his diſciples muſt deny themſelves, and be prepared to ſuffer, and even to die for the Goſpel, if thereunto called; that there is nothing of ſo great importance to us, as the ſaving our ſouls; and that we ought to make an open profeſſion of godlineſs and truth, if we would have him own us for his true diſciples, and if we deſire to be received into his glory when he comes to judge the world. Thus did *Jeſus Chriſt* inſtruct men in the moſt important duties of religion, and ſet before them the moſt powerful motives to engage them to the practice of them.

CHAP. IX. 1—29.

THIS part of the ninth chapter contains three things: I. The transfiguration of *Jeſus Chriſt*. II. The explanation which he gave his diſciples of the

the prediction of the coming of *Elias*. III. The healing of the lunatic, whom the apoſtles could not cure.

REFLECTIONS.

I. OUR Lord ſhewed to three of his apoſtles the glory of his transfiguration, that he might fully convince them, by this glorious appearance, that he was the Son of God, and alſo to ſtrengthen their faith, which was like to be ſhaken in a ſhort time by his death. The appearing of *Moſes* and *Elias* on this occaſion ſhewed, that *Jeſus* was that great Redeemer whoſe coming the prophets had foretold; and that he far excelled the greateſt of the prophets, among whom *Moſes* and *Elias* were the chief. Beſides this, God declared, by a voice from heaven, that *Jeſus Chriſt* was his beloved Son. The voice which God cauſed to be heard from heaven upon that occaſion, teaches us, that our Lord is that great prophet whom all men are bound to hear and to obey. This transfiguration of *Chriſt* is alſo an image of the glory wherein he ſhall appear at the laſt day; and the preſence of *Moſes* and *Elias* proves, that thoſe holy men lived after their departure out of this world, and that there is a ſtate of happineſs reſerved for the righteous after this life. II. Our Lord informed his diſciples on this occaſion, that *John* the Baptiſt is that *Elias* who was to come, according to the prophecy of *Malachi*. The name of *Elias* was given to the forerunner of the Meſſiah, becauſe, like that prophet, he was to reform the manners of men, and to eſtabliſh the ſervice of God. The honourable mention our Saviour makes of *John* the Baptiſt, obliges us to acknowledge the dignity of the perſon of that great prophet, to reflect ſeriouſly upon the deſign of his miniſtry, and to ſubmit to his doctrine, as well as that of *Jeſus Chriſt*, who is ſtill greater than his forerunner. III. In the cure of the lunatic, whom the apoſtles could not cure, becauſe they were not ſufficiently perſuaded that they were able to work that miracle in the name of *Jeſus Chriſt*, we may remark,

remark, that the faith of the apoſtles was as yet very weak: but that our Lord, ſeeing the deplorable condition of the young man, and having reſpect to the faith and tears of his father, healed him perfectly, and that only by a word. What *Chriſt* ſaid to his apoſtles on this occaſion ſhews us, that the power of working miracles was to be obtained of God by faith, prayer, and faſting. Theſe means being not leſs neceſſary to reſiſt temptation, and to procure us the all-powerful aſſiſtance of God's grace, we ought carefully to practiſe them.

CHAP. IX. 30—51.

I. OUR Lord warns his diſciples of his approaching death. II. He reproves their diſputing who ſhould be the greateſt in the kingdom of the Meſſiah, and teaches them humility, by placing a little child in the midſt of them. III. He blames St. *John*, and his other diſciples, for oppoſing a man who caſt out devils in his name, told them that they ought not to offend nor diſcourage any of thoſe that believe in him. IV. He exhorts them to avoid every thing that might be a ſcandal, or an occaſion of falling, either to themſelves or others, threatening ſuch as do not avoid thus giving offence, with the pains of hell: he repreſents to them, that being the ſalt of the earth, they ought to endeavour after the improvement and edification of all men, particularly taking care to diſcourage no one, to entertain ſentiments of charity towards all, and to live together in peace and unity.

REFLECTIONS.

WE muſt conſider, I. That if the apoſtles did not comprehend what our Lord ſaid concerning his death, it was becauſe they could not conceive how the Meſſiah ſhould die and ſuffer in a cruel and ignominious manner. II. The diſpute that aroſe among them who ſhould be the greateſt in the kingdom of the Meſſiah, was owing to the opinion they had entertained

tained that his kingdom ſhould be a temporal kingdom, and like the kingdoms of this world. *Chriſt* undeceived them, by ſetting before them a little child; the deſign of which was, to inſpire them with humble ſentiments, and to teach them not to affect the preeminence over each other, nor to deſpiſe any one. This leſſon concerns all Chriſtians, who ought to baniſh from their hearts all proud and haughty thoughts, and to become like children in meekneſs, innocence, and humility. III. It is to be obſerved, that our Lord reproves his diſciples, becauſe they would have hindered a man who did not follow them, from caſting out devils in the name of *Jeſus Chriſt*. From whence we ought to learn, not to reject any who profeſs to love the Lord *Jeſus*, and to believe him: but on the contrary, to look upon them as brethren, to cheriſh them, and join ourſelves to them. This is what he ſhews yet more expreſsly when he ſays, that it is a very great ſin to deſpiſe or offend any of his diſciples, even though they ſhould betray ſome weakneſs, or might appear contemptible to the world. Laſtly, Our Saviour earneſtly exhorts us, and with the ſevereſt threatenings, to reſiſt every thing that may draw us into ſin, reſolutely to renounce whatever is moſt dear to us, to mortify our inclinations, and even to undergo the greateſt troubles, rather than to fall ourſelves, or to make others fall into ſin, and thereby expoſe ourſelves and them to be caſt into hell, where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

CHAP. X. 1—31.

CHRIST does three things: I. He anſwers the Phariſees, who queſtioned with him about divorces, and told them, that the cuſtom which prevailed among the *Jews*, of putting away their wives for every cauſe, was contrary to the inſtitution of marriage. II. He bleſſes young children. III. He anſwers a rich young man who had aſked him what he muſt do to be ſaved; upon which occaſion he ſays, that riches would hinder many

many people from believing in him; but that he would abundantly reward thoſe that ſhould forſake their goods, and all that was deareſt to them, to follow him.

REFLECTIONS.

WE may make this general obſervation upon what our Saviour ſays about marriage: That divorce, as practiſed by the *Jews*, was an irregularity which God did not approve, but which however was tolerated, becauſe of the carnal humour of that people, and of their natural inclination to diſobedience; but that theſe divorces ought not to be ſuffered among Chriſtians, no more than ſeveral other things of a like nature which God bore with formerly; that the laws of marriage are inviolable, that they equally bind the man and the woman, and therefore the Son of God having ſettled the laws of marriage again upon the ſame foot they were at the beginning, nothing but adultery can juſtify a divorce, and the liberty of marrying again. The ceremony of impoſition of hands, which *Chriſt* practiſed with reſpect to little children, and the prayer he made for them, convinces us that children are dear to him; that it is a practice very agreeable to his will to dedicate them to God by baptiſm and prayer; and that the kingdom of heaven is reſerved for thoſe only who, like children, are meek and innocent, and untainted with the love of the world, or any of its vanities. We may learn from what paſſed between *Chriſt* and the rich young man, that to enter into eternal life, we muſt keep the commandments of God; and that beſides, we ought on ſome occaſions to forſake all that we poſſeſs in this world; and that in general, Chriſtians ought not to ſet their hearts upon riches; and that if God beſtows them upon us, we ſhould employ them to charitable purpoſes. We gather moreover from the diſcourſe of our Lord, that this renunciation of worldly goods, as hard as it may ſeem at firſt, is not impoſſible, no more than our other

other duties; and that thoſe who have thus renounced the good things of this life, as the apoſtles did formerly, ſhall be abundantly rewarded, both here and hereafter. Laſtly, The example of this young man, who had ſomething good in him, and for which, *Chriſt* loved him, but who was diſcouraged when our Saviour told him that he muſt diſpoſe of his goods, ſhews, that it may happen, that people who have good intentions, and ſome good qualities, may, nevertheleſs, fail of ſalvation, if they have not courage enough to do all that is required of them, in order to obtain it; if they will not renounce certain ruling paſſions, which obſtruct their ſalvation, particularly the love of riches, and a fondneſs for the things of this world.

CHAP. X. 32—53.

I. OUR Lord warns his diſciples of his death and reſurrection. II. Returns an anſwer to *James* and *John*, who fancying, like the reſt of the *Jews*, that the Meſſiah was to have a glorious reign upon earth, begged of him the chief dignities in his kingdom. III. He reſtores ſight to a blind man near *Jericho*.

REFLECTIONS.

WE may conſider here in the firſt place, that the time of *Chriſt*'s death drawing nigh, he revealed more plainly to his apoſtles that he was to be crucified, and to riſe again; but they were troubled and amazed at this diſcourſe, becauſe they expected to ſee their maſter reign on earth with glory. In this we diſcover, on one hand, the wiſdom and goodneſs of our Lord, who was pleaſed thus to prepare his diſciples for that which was to befal him; and on the other hand, that thoſe diſciples did ſtill labour under great prejudices; and that they knew not yet what he was to do to ſave mankind. In the next place, we muſt attend to what *Chriſt* ſaid to St. *James* and St. *John*, who thought of being highly diſtinguiſhed in his kingdom, that inſtead

ſtead of expecting to be raiſed to great dignities, they ſhould be prepared to drink of the ſame cup, and to be baptiſed with the ſame baptiſm as he was; that is to ſay, to paſs through very great ſufferings, and even ſubmit to death itſelf; and that therefore they ought to be humbled, and to become the ſervants of one another, after the example of their Lord, who came into the world only to ſerve and to ſuffer. Theſe leſſons, and this great example of humility, concern us as well as the apoſtles; and we ought to ſet them continually before us, as the rule of our ſentiments, and of our behaviour. Laſtly, The cure which our Lord granted to the blind man, who implored his aſſiſtance with ſo much fervency, is a freſh proof of his power and goodneſs; and we may infer from it, that if he was ſo ready to aſſiſt the unfortunate, he is yet more diſpoſed to ſave all ſuch as call upon him with humility, and that ſeek of him eternal life.

CHAP. XI.

I. *JESUS CHRIST* makes his royal entry into *Jeruſalem*. II. He drives out of the temple thoſe that profaned it by ſelling doves and other creatures for the ſacrifices, and by changing of money. III. He cauſes the fig-tree to wither by his word. And IV. He anſwers the Phariſees who required an account of his authority.

REFLECTIONS.

I. IT is to be obſerved, that our Lord made his royal entry into *Jeruſalem* a few days before his death, to ſhew, that he was that glorious king, that Redeemer whoſe coming the prophets had foretold, but which he avoided to declare publicly during his life. But the manner wherein he made his entry, riding upon a young aſs, ſhewed his meekneſs and humility; and was a token that his kingdom no way reſembled the kingdoms of this world. Now as we do much better underſtand the glory of *Jeſus Chriſt*, and the nature

of

of his kingdom, than the people who attended him on that ſolemn occaſion, we are the more engaged to rejoice and praiſe God, for having ſent us this great Saviour, and for the manifeſtation of his kingdom. II. It muſt be obſerved, that the ſame day on which *Chriſt* made his royal entry, he went to the temple and drove out thoſe that profaned it, to make the *Jews* ſenſible of his divine authority; and, by acting thus as maſter in the temple, to ſhew that he was the Son of God. It is likewiſe a warning to us not to profane, either by hypocriſy, impiety or irreverence, the places where God is worſhipped and called upon. As for the miracle of the withered fig-tree, we muſt know this tree was of a particular kind, one of thoſe fig trees which preſerved all the winter their leaves and their figs, and whoſe fruit grow ripe in ſpring. *Jeſus* therefore ſeeing this fig-tree which had leaves, and which might have had figs too, went to ſeek fruit thereon, though it was not the ſeaſon for common figs; this he did that he might take occaſion, by this miracle, to make it wither, and to ſhew his diſciples, that faith and prayer obtain all things from God; but he expreſsly warns us, that prayer muſt be made in the ſpirit of love, and that when we offer up our prayers to God, we ſhould previouſly forgive one another. The anſwer our Lord returned to the Phariſees, who aſked him whence he had his authority, was to convince them that their blindneſs and unbelief were wilful, and that his authority proceeded from heaven, as well as that of *John* the Baptiſt; but we ſhould be yet more guilty than thoſe Phariſees, if, knowing that *John* the Baptiſt and *Jeſus Chriſt* were ſent from God, and profeſſing to believe the ſame, we ſhould not ſubmit to the doctrine which they preached, and above all, to the authority of the Son of God, our Lord *Jeſus Chriſt*.

CHAP.

CHAP. XII. 1—27.

I. *CHRIST* propoſes the parable of the huſbandmen. II. Anſwers the queſtion that was put to him about paying tribute to the emperor. And, III. Another queſtion which the Sadducees aſked him about the reſurrection.

REFLECTIONS.

THE meaning of the parable of the huſbandmen is, that the *Jews*, after having rejected and perſecuted the prophets, would put to death the Son of God, for which reaſon God would take away his covenant from them, and deſtroy them; that he would cauſe the Goſpel to be preached to the Gentiles, and that *Chriſt*, who had been rejected by the chief among the *Jews*, ſhould become the head and king of the church, and be exalted to the right hand of God. Two reflections may be made upon this parable: The firſt is, That all that *Jeſus* had foretold, was fulfilled ſoon after by the deſtruction of *Jeruſalem*, by the calling of the Gentiles, and by the eſtabliſhment of the kingdom of our Lord. The ſecond, That as God ſeverely puniſhed the ingratitude of the *Jews*, he will more ſeverely puniſh the infidelity of thoſe, who, living under the Goſpel, deſpiſe the offers of his grace, and diſobey his laws. We may ſee by the anſwer that *Chriſt* made concerning the tribute, that he diſcovered the ſnare which the Phariſees laid for him, and avoided it by telling them to *render unto Cæſar the things that are Cæſar's, and unto God the things that are God's*. From hence we ſhould gather, that we are bound to ſubmit to the authority of kings and princes, and to yield them all that is due to them; and likewiſe to acquit ourſelves inviolably of thoſe duties which we are bound by our religion to pay to God. Our Lord had at that time a remarkable diſpute with the Sadducees, who denied the reſurrection of the dead. The queſtion they put to him upon the ſubject he anſwered in ſuch

a manner as confounded them, and proved them to be in a great error. This paſſage is well worth our attention: in it *Chriſt* teaches us the certainty of the reſurrection, and the ſtate of thoſe that ſhall riſe again; which ought to ſtrengthen us in the belief of this great and comfortable truth, and induce us to imitate the faith and piety of the Patriarchs, ſince the Lord has declared himſelf to be their God, even after their death; and it ſhould likewiſe teach us to live after a pure and ſpiritual manner, that we may partake of the glory of a happy reſurrection.

CHAP. XII. 28—44.

I. *CHRIST* anſwers one of the Scribes who aſked him which was the greateſt commandment. II. He aſks the Phariſees, how the Meſſiah could be at the ſame time the Son and Lord of *David*. III. He condemns the hypocriſy of the Scribes. IV. He praiſes the offering of a poor widow.

REFLECTIONS.

I. WE have here a very important leſſon, namely, that the chief commandment, and that which includes all the reſt, is to love God with all our heart, and to love our neighbour as ourſelves; that this is moſt acceptable to God, and worth more than all the ceremonies, and all the external duties of religion. Thoſe who rightly underſtand this truth, and labour, above all things, to fix in their hearts this love of God, and of their neighbour, are in a fit diſpoſition to enter into the kingdom of heaven, as our Lord has expreſsly declared. II. Our Lord aſking the Phariſees, How *David* could call the Meſſiah his Lord, in the CXth Pſalm, ſince he was his Son; they were put to ſilence, and could not anſwer him a word. By this queſtion, he was minded to make them ſenſible of their ignorance, but would not explain the difficulty, becauſe they would not have believed what he ſaid to them, and becauſe he would not then ſpeak openly of the dignity

dignity of his perſon; but this queſtion has nothing obſcure in it with reſpect to us, ſince we know *Chriſt* is the ſon of *David*, becauſe, as man, he deſcended from him; but that he was his Lord, as the Son of God. III. The reproaches *Chriſt* caſt upon the Scribes, ſhews us, that pride, hypocriſy, and covetouſneſs, are moſt odious vices, eſpecially in thoſe that teach others, and make great profeſſions of piety. IV. The judgment which our Lord paſſed upon the offering of a poor widow, that caſt two little pieces of money into a cheſt, where they kept that which was given for the uſe of the temple, and for divine ſervice, is a proof that God does chiefly regard the heart and intention; and that the contributions and alms of poor people, though they are of little value, are as well received as thoſe of the rich, when the poor give as much as their poverty will allow them, and when they do it out of a principle of piety and charity.

CHAP. XIII.

CHRIST ſpeaks of the ſigns that were to precede the deſtruction of *Jeruſalem*, and the end of the world. He ſays there would ariſe falſe prophets, and falſe Meſſiahs; that there would be wars, famines, and all ſorts of calamities; that his diſciples would be perſecuted, and the Goſpel preached throughout the world. He foretels them that the idolaters ſhould ſoon enter into *Judea*, and beſiege *Jeruſalem*; that there would appear every where tokens of the wrath of God; that then the Son of Man would manifeſt himſelf in his glory; and that theſe things ſhould happen before that generation paſſed away. He exhorts his diſciples to depart from *Jeruſalem* at that time, to hold themſelves ready, and to watch for his coming; and to induce them ſo to do, ſays, that the exact time of his coming was uncertain.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS diſcourſe of the Son of God offers to our mind three principal reflections. I. That the event

did fully verify all theſe predictions of our Lord, ſoon after his departure out of this world, foraſmuch as ſeveral deceivers or impoſtors appeared at that time; the *Jews* were afflicted with war, and ſcourges of every kind; the Apoſtles and Chriſtians were perſecuted; the Goſpel ſpread in ſeveral parts of the world; *Jeruſalem* beſieged and deſtroyed by the *Romans*, and the Chriſtians that came out of it preſerved from that deſolation; and laſtly, that all theſe things happened before all the men that lived in *Chriſt*'s time were dead, as he had poſitively foretold. All theſe are ſo many undeniable proofs of the truth and divinity of the Goſpel, and viſible tokens of the divine vengeance upon the *Jews*. II. This ought to convince us, that what *Chriſt* ſaid no leſs poſitively about his laſt coming, about the end of the world, the univerſal judgment, and the puniſhment of wicked men, ſhall not fail to come to paſs. III. The third reflection is, that the time of his coming is unknown to us, as well as the time of our own death, God having concealed it from us in his wiſdom and goodneſs; that therefore we ought to think upon it continually, and to prepare ourſelves for it by prayer, by a holy life, and by the practice of every good work, ſerving God faithfully every one in his calling, that we be not ſurprized by that terrible day. This is what our Lord himſelf exhorts us to, in theſe words, at the end of this diſcourſe, which ſhew too the uſe and deſign of it. *Take heed to yourſelves, watch and pray, for you know not when your Lord will come; and what I ſay unto you, I ſay unto all, Watch.*

CHAP. XIV. 1—31.

ST. *Mark* begins here the hiſtory of our Saviour's paſſion, and relates, I. How a woman anointed him with a precious oil. II. How *Judas* promiſed the *Jews* to betray his Maſter to them. III. The celebration of the paſſover the evening before his death, and how, during ſupper, he foretold the treachery of

Judas,

Judas, and St. *Peter*'s denial of him, and the inſtitution of the Lord's Supper.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE firſt reflection to be made relates to the action of that woman, who poured on *Jeſus* a precious ointment. Since *Chriſt* approved of that action, commended her zeal and good intentions, and declared, that the remembrance of it ſhould be perpetuated in the church, we cannot doubt but he will likewiſe approve all that we ſhall do for his honour; his reply to thoſe who would have had that ointment ſold, and the money given to the poor, teaches us to avoid raſh judgments, and not to blame too haſtily the actions of other people, when they may proceed from a good principle; and that we ought to take care of the poor, and embrace every opportunity of doing good to them. II. The example of *Judas* ſhews, that covetouſneſs blinds and hardens men to ſuch a degree, that it puts them upon committing all ſorts of crimes. III. Since *Chriſt* foretold the treachery of *Judas*, it appeared from thence, that nothing was concealed from him; that he knew the hearts and deſigns of men; that he foreſaw what was to happen to himſelf, and conſequently that all his ſufferings were voluntary. IV. *Chriſt* celebrated the paſſover with his diſciples, according to the cuſtom of the *Jews*, to ſhew, that he ſtrictly obſerved every thing that was preſcribed by the law of God; but he chiefly did it, becauſe his deſign was to inſtitute the Lord's Supper, and to ſubſtitute it in the place of the *Jewiſh* paſſover. This ought to inſpire us with a very great reſpect for this divine ceremony, which our Lord has eſtabliſhed as a memorial of his death, and to engage us to celebrate it with faith and thankſgiving, according to his intentions. Finally, The prediction that St. *Peter* ſhould deny him, ſuppoſes our Lord to have an entire knowledge of the heart of man; and what he ſaid to that apoſtle, who vowed he would never forſake him, ought to fill

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us with a diſtruſt of ourſelves, which is of great uſe; and induce us to improve the warning which God gives us, and to ſeek in humility, in watching, and in prayer, for that conſtancy and courage ſo neceſſary to ſecure us from being ſurpriſed by temptation.

CHAP. XIV. 32—72.

I. ST. *Mark* relates here what *Chriſt* ſuffered in the garden. II. How he was apprehended by the *Jews* who were conducted by *Judas*. III. What paſſed while *Jeſus* was before the council. IV. St. *Peter*'s fall, and his repentance.

REFLECTIONS.

THE extreme anguiſh which our Lord felt in the garden is one of the moſt remarkable circumſtances of his paſſion. It diſcovers very plainly to us, that he ſuffered to atone for the ſins of mankind; and we may judge from thence how great is the horror of ſin, and with what deſpair the wicked will be ſeized, when they are rejected of God, and undergo the puniſhment due to their ſins. We ought next, in imitation of *Jeſus Chriſt*, who in his agony prayed with ſo much fervour, and with ſo perfect a ſubmiſſion to the will of his Father, to call upon God with perſeverance when we are under affliction; and at the ſame time, with an entire reſignation to his will, ſaying, *Lord, not what I will, but what thou wilt.* *Jeſus Chriſt* gives us all a very important piece of advice, when he ſays, *Watch and pray, leſt you enter into temptation; the ſpirit truly is ready, but the fleſh is weak.* *Chriſt* aſſures us thereby, that the infallible way not to fall into ſin, is to diſtruſt our own weakneſs, and to watch and pray; but that we are drawn away by temptations as ſoon as ever we neglect theſe means. By the manner in which our Lord was taken, and by what he then ſaid to *Judas*, and to the *Jews*, it appears plainly, that of his own free choice, and by the divine permiſſion, he was taken and condemned; this is another

powerful

powerful inducement for us to love our Saviour moſt fervently, who has been pleaſed to expoſe himſelf thus freely to death for our ſakes, and to engage us to acquieſce and ſubmit to the will of the Lord in all things. Obſerve, that *Jeſus* appeared before the council; that he was examined; and that witneſſes were heard againſt him; but could not be convicted of any crime, notwithſtanding all the pains which his enemies took to find out accuſations and falſe witneſſes againſt him; and was condemned only becauſe he confeſſed himſelf to be the Son of God; which was ſo ordered by Providence, to evince the perfect innocence of our Lord. That great meekneſs, and that ſpirit of humility and patience, which our Lord manifeſted in his diſcourſes, and in ſuffering all the indignities they put upon him, is a very ſenſible proof of his ſubmiſſion to the will of his Father, and of his love towards us, and a pattern of patience, to which we ought to conform ourſelves. We have likewiſe ſeen, how our Lord owned that he was the Son of God; and ſaid that the *Jews* ſhould ſee him ſitting at the right hand of God, and coming in his glory. This was fulfilled quickly after, when the *Jews* were deſtroyed, and when they ſaw the kingdom of our Lord eſtabliſhed in the world. We ought alſo to improve, to our own advantage, the fall of St. *Peter*, who denied his Maſter, after ſuch a ſolemn proteſtation that he would never forſake him. Every body, even thoſe who have great zeal and good intentions, may learn from hence, how great our weakneſs is, and that we ought to be upon our guard againſt temptation; and the repentance of this apoſtle, which was ſo ſpeedy and ſo bitter, teaches us, that when we ſtumble, or have fallen, we ought to riſe again immediately, be heartily grieved for our ſin, and repair it by having recourſe to the mercy of God, and by a ſincere converſion and reformation.

CHAP.

CHAP. XV.

I. *CHRIST* is brought before *Pilate*, who, after having endeavoured to deliver him, conſents at laſt to his death. II. He is crucified, dies, and is buried.

REFLECTIONS.

IN what paſſed before *Pilate*, there are four things chiefly to be obſerved. I. The injuſtice and rage of the *Jews*, which nothing could appeaſe, and who ſo earneſtly ſolicited the condemnation of *Jeſus*, that they preferred even a murderer before him. II. The humility, ſilence, and patience of our Lord, who ſubmitted himſelf to the judgment of *Pilate*, and underwent, without complaining, all the unjuſt treatment he received from them. Theſe are ſtrong proofs of his love for men, whom he deſired to ſave; and of his ſubmiſſion to the will of his Father; and it is likewiſe an example of reſignation for ſuch as are expoſed to ſufferings, or to the injuſtice of men. III. It is to be obſerved, that the innocence of *Chriſt* was fully acknowledged by *Pilate*, which aggravated the guilt of the *Jews*, as well as that of the governor. And, laſtly, That that unjuſt judge, after having refuſed to do what the *Jews* required, and after having endeavoured to ſave the life of *Chriſt*, did at length pronounce the ſentence of death againſt him. *Pilate* knew what juſtice required of him; he had even good intentions, but wanted courage and reſolution to follow them. Thus do they who ſin againſt conviction: they know their duty, and have ſome good inclination towards it; but after they have reſiſted temptation for a while, do at laſt yield to it for fear of men, and out of views of policy and intereſt, or for ſome other principle of the like nature; whereas good men do always adhere to their duty, and purſue with ſteadineſs the dictates of their conſcience, without turning aſide for any conſideration whatever. In the hiſtory

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of our Lord's paſſion, we are chiefly to conſider the torments of that cruel puniſhment he underwent; the ſhame and ignominy to which he was expoſed, by being crucified between two thieves; the outrages and inſults which the Phariſees and prieſts offered to him whilſt he was faſtened to the croſs; and, laſtly, The death which put an end to his ſufferings. We diſcover in all this the profound humiliation of the Son of God; the great love that he has ſhewn for us, and an example of moſt perfect patience. Wherefore we ought to look upon his death as the price of our redemption, and the ſupport of our faith; to love this kind Saviour, who has ſo loved us; to renounce ſin, which he came to deſtroy by his death; and to learn from him to bear our croſs, and to ſuffer patiently when we are called thereto. The hiſtory of *Chriſt*'s burial, and the enquiry *Pilate* made before he would grant his body to *Joſeph*, prove that he was really dead, and conſequently that he really roſe again. The conſideration of his burial is likewiſe very proper to diſperſe the fear that we may entertain of death, and of the grave, and to raiſe our minds to the expectation of a better life.

CHAP. XVI.

I. IN this laſt chapter of St. *Mark*, we ſee the hiſtory of the reſurrection of *Jeſus Chriſt*. II. The orders he gave his apoſtles before he left the world. And, III. His aſcenſion.

REFLECTIONS.

WHAT is contained in this chapter eſtabliſhes the truth and certainty of the reſurrection of *Jeſus Chriſt*, ſince it was confirmed by the apparition and teſtimony of the angels, and that our Lord was ſeen firſt by the women that went to his ſepulchre, and afterwards by the apoſtles, at ſeveral times. We ought to conſider next, how glorious this reſurrection was, God having been pleaſed to ſend angels to open the tomb of our Lord,

Lord, and to declare to men that he was riſen again. This wonderful event proves, therefore, that *Jeſus* was the Son of God, and is an aſſurance to us, that he has perfectly reconciled us to God by the ſacrifice of himſelf, and that he has overcome death and the grave. This reſurrection is likewiſe a certain earneſt of our own, which ought to fill us with comfort and confidence, and powerfully excite us to holineſs. The command that *Chriſt* gave his apoſtles, to go and preach, and baptize throughout the world, and the power with which he endued them to work all ſorts of miracles, ſhew that he ſpake as king of the church, and Lord of all things; and the event agreeing with what he had ſaid, does undeniably prove, that he is exalted to a ſupreme power, and that the Goſpel is a divine and heavenly doctrine. We may obſerve particularly, that *Chriſt* ſpeaks of baptiſm after ſuch a manner, as proves that this ceremony is of divine inſtitution; but that he declares, at the ſame time, that baptiſm will not ſave us, unleſs it be attended with a truth faith. Laſtly, the aſcenſion of *Chriſt* obliges us to conſider him as one who has a ſovereign authority over all things, and who muſt be our judge. And ſince he is likewiſe gone to heaven, to prepare a place for us there, we may aſpire and endeavour, by holineſs and by good works, to attain to that glorious manſion into which our Redeemer is entered, and where he is ſeated at the right hand of God.

The end of the Goſpel according to St. MARK.

THE

THE

GOSPEL

ACCORDING TO

ST. LUKE.

ARGUMENT.

This Goſpel was written about twenty years after the aſcenſion of Jeſus Chriſt, *by St.* Luke, *who was the diſciple and companion of St.* Paul, *and followed him in his travels.*

CHAP. I, 1—38.

I. AN angel appearing to *Zechariah* foretels the birth of *John* the Baptiſt. II. And ſix months after, the ſame angels was ſent to the Bleſſed Virgin, to foretel the birth of our Lord.

REFLECTIONS *after reading the chapter.*

WHAT we have been reading relates to the birth of *John* the Baptiſt, and his miniſtry. As to his birth, it may be obſerved, that there was ſomething extraordinary and ſupernatural in it, ſince he proceeded from a father advanced in years, and from a mother that was old and barren; that God gave notice of his birth by an angel; and that *Zechariah* the father,

father, who could not believe it, was assured of it by a miracle, which God wrought in striking him dumb. All which tended to shew, that *John* the Baptist was to be an extraordinary person, and sent from God; this birth was likewise a prelude to that of *Jesus Christ*, which would be yet more miraculous, since he was to be born of a virgin. As to the ministry of *John* the Baptist, we ought seriously to consider what the angel said to *Zechariah*, revealing to him what his son was one day to be; namely, that he would be filled with the Holy Ghost, that he should go before the face of the Lord, and that, like another *Elias*, he would persuade men to turn unto God, and to live a life of righteousness by the severity of his own life, by his authority, by his great zeal, and by the power of his exhortations; and that by this means he would prepare them to receive the Messiah, of whom he was to be the forerunner. Let us learn from hence this important lesson, that the design of God in sending *John* the Baptist, and afterwards *Jesus Christ*, was to bring about the conversion of mankind, to withdraw them from their sins, and make them a holy people, and given to good works. In what the angel said to the Virgin *Mary*, when he acquainted her that she was to be the mother of *Jesus Christ*, we may chiefly remark these two things: One, that the body of our Lord was formed of the substance of the Virgin, by the operation of the Holy Ghost; and the other, that this *Jesus*, who was to be born of *Mary*, would be the Son of God, that he would be exalted to very great glory, and that he would reign for ever. From whence we may collect, that the birth of *Christ* was miraculous, and entirely free from pollution; that he did really assume our nature, and become man like unto us; but that he was also perfectly holy and separated from sinners. Lastly, It is to be observed, that though the Blessed Virgin could at first scarce believe what the angel told her, yet when she had heard the message more fully explained, she then no longer doubted but what had been declared to her

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from God would certainly come to paſs. This was a proof of the faith and piety of the Bleſſed Virgin; and a pattern to us how we ſhould believe the promiſes of God, made to us in his word; being fully perſuaded that he will never want power nor means to bring about his promiſes, how difficult ſoever the execution of them may appear to us.

CHAP. I. 39—80.

I. ST. *Luke* gives us an account of the Bleſſed Virgin's viſit to *Elizabeth*, and her ſong on this occaſion. II. Of the birth of *John* the Baptiſt, and the ſong of his father *Zechariah*.

REFLECTIONS.

LET it here be conſidered, I. That the Bleſſed Virgin having been informed by the angel *Gabriel*, that her couſin *Elizabeth* had alſo miraculouſly conceived, went immediately to viſit her, and was by this means more fully confirmed in a belief that the Meſſiah ſhould be born of her, according to the meſſage ſhe had received from God. But what deſerves chiefly to be taken notice of, is the ſong of *Mary*, on this occaſion. In this ſong we ſee how ſhe was tranſported with joy and gratitude at the ſenſe of the favour God had done her, in making choice of her to be the mother of the Meſſiah. In it we diſcover her profound humility, and at the ſame time her faith and firm perſuaſion that God was going to deliver his people, and to fulfil the promiſes he had made them of ſending the Redeemer. This engages us to honour the memory of the Bleſſed Virgin, and to celebrate her happineſs as ſhe herſelf has deſcribed it; to imitate her piety, her faith, and her other virtues: to abaſe ourſelves before God as ſhe did, under the ſenſe of his mercies, and of our own unworthineſs, and praiſe him above all things for having ſent into the world *Chriſt* our Saviour, according to the promiſes made by the prophets. The birth of *John* the Baptiſt

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was attended with ſeveral very remarkable circumſtances; *Zechariah* his father did then recover his ſpeech by a miracle; the rumour of his ſon's birth was ſpread abroad, and all the people were in great expectation what that child would one day be. All theſe events were the diſpenſations of Providence, that the *Jews* might be prepared to look upon *John* the Baptiſt as one ſent from God, to receive his preaching, and to believe his teſtimony concerning *Jeſus Chriſt*. In the ſong which *Zechariah* did then pronounce by the inſpiration of the Holy Ghoſt, we may obſerve theſe three things: Firſt, His joy, his gratitude, and thanks to God, that the time was come to redeem his people. Secondly, His extraordinary faith, ſince, though the Meſſiah was yet unborn, he was firmly convinced that he would ſhortly appear, and that his ſon would be his forerunner. Thirdly, *Zechariah* ſhews in this ſong the deſign of *Chriſt*'s coming, when he ſays, *That we being delivered from the hands of our enemies, might ſerve God without fear, in holineſs and righteouſneſs all the days of our life.* This ſhould ſtir us up to bleſs God with *Zechariah*, and even more than he, for ſaving us by *Jeſus Chriſt*, and to extol his mercy, as well as his faithfulneſs, and the truth of his promiſes. And ſince our Lord is come to conſecrate us to the ſervice of God, it is our duty to anſwer the deſign of his coming, by ſerving God faithfully, and by living in holineſs and righteouſneſs all the days of our life.

CHAP. II. 1—20.

WE have here the hiſtory of the birth of *Jeſus Chriſt*.

REFLECTIONS.

THE firſt reflection we are to make upon the hiſtory of our Saviour's birth is, that the Meſſiah being to be born at *Bethlehem*, according to the prophecies, Providence conducted the Bleſſed Virgin from *Galilee*,

where ſhe dwelt, to that city, by means of the decree of the emperor *Auguſtus*, who had ordered an account to be taken of the number of all his ſubjects, and that therefore every one ſhould reſort to the place of his birth. II. That our Lord was born in very poor and mean circumſtances, being born in an inn, and laid in a manger; by which God was pleaſed as it were to declare beforehand, that *Chriſt* was not to live in pomp and glory, and that his kingdom would not be of this world, and that humility and poverty would be his character. III. For the ſame reaſon it was that the firſt perſons who were honoured with the news of *Chriſt*'s birth were ſhepherds, plain men, of an obſcure condition, and not the rich and great. All theſe things are great leſſons of humility to Chriſtians. However, it muſt be obſerved, that this birth was rendered illuſtrious by the apparition of the angels, and by the ſong of thoſe bleſſed ſpirits. It pleaſed God, moreover, that the ſhepherds ſhould go to *Bethlehem* to ſee the child *Jeſus*, and to inform the Holy Virgin of all the wonders they had ſeen and heard; and then that they ſhould publiſh them all abroad, that the expectation of the *Jews* might be excited, and they prepared for the reception of *Jeſus Chriſt*. All theſe circumſtances of our Lord's birth ought to ſtrengthen our faith, and fill us with joy and comfort; we ought eſpecially to join our praiſes to thoſe of the ſhepherds and holy angels, and bleſs God with them, that a Saviour is born unto us; and, by his birth, peace given to the earth, and the good will of God ſo clearly manifeſted towards men.

CHAP. II. 21—52.

ST. *Luke* relates, I. The circumciſion of *Chriſt*, the preſenting him in the temple, and the thankſgivings of *Simeon* and *Anna* the Propheteſs. II. He informs us in the next place, how *Chriſt*, being twelve years old, was found in the temple in the midſt of the doctors.

REFLEC-

REFLECTIONS.

WE may conſider, I. In relation to what is here ſaid about the circumciſion of *Chriſt*, his preſentation in the temple, the purification of the Virgin, and the offering which ſhe made according to the cuſtom, that God thought fit that all theſe things ſhould be obſerved, after the birth of our Lord, becauſe they were preſcribed by the law, and that the *Jews* might not have any appearance of reaſon for rejecting him. II. The joy which *Simeon* and *Anna* the Propheteſs ſhewed at that time, and the praiſes which they publickly gave to God, are an argument of their faith and zeal, and that the birth of *Chriſt* is the moſt happy and the moſt ſalutary event that ever came to paſs, and that therefore we ought to have a very joyful ſenſe of it, and inceſſantly to bleſs the Lord for it; and the rather, becauſe what *Simeon* ſaid in his ſong, has been accompliſhed in us, and we are ſome of thoſe Gentiles, to whom the Meſſiah came to give light and ſalvation. III. What *Simeon* ſaid to the Bleſſed Virgin, of the glory of her Son, as well as of the contradictions and ſufferings to which he ſhould be expoſed, tended to convince her, that the kingdom of *Chriſt* would not be a temporal kingdom, and to prepare her to ſee him rejected by the *Jews*, and put to death. As for us, we ought to learn from thence, that our Saviour was to be received by ſome, and rejected by others; and that if his coming be a bleſſing to ſuch as receive him with faith, it is an occaſion of ſcandal and deſtruction to unbelievers. IV. That which happened to *Chriſt* at the age of twelve years, when he was found in the temple in the midſt of the doctors, is the only circumſtance of his life, from his birth and return from *Egypt*, to the beginning of his miniſtry, which has been made known to us. This particular inſtance was recorded to ſhew, that there appeared in him, even from his earlieſt youth, extraordinary underſtanding, wiſdom, and zeal, and that he was to be one day endowed with the ſpirit of God in an abundant manner.

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God was pleaſed thereby to begin to make him known to the *Jews*, and to diſpoſe them to profit by his miniſtry, when he ſhould exerciſe it among them.

CHAP. III.

THIS chapter contains three things: I. The preaching of *John* the Baptiſt. II. The baptiſm of *Jeſus Chriſt*. And, III. His genealogy.

REFLECTIONS.

ST. *Luke* informs us here, that before the appearance of our Lord, *John* the Baptiſt was ſent, as had been foretold by the prophets, to prepare the *Jews* for his reception: this he did by preaching repentance, and by exhorting the people to believe on him who was to come ſoon after; by baptizing thoſe that received his doctrine, and by threatening the unbelieving and impenitent *Jews*, that although they were the children of *Abraham*, they ſhould not eſcape the wrath to come, and that God could raiſe up other children to *Abraham*, even from the ſtones; which denoted that the Gentiles ſhould be called in their ſtead. All this tended to make the *Jews* underſtand that the kingdom of the Meſſiah was ſhortly to be manifeſted; but that it was to be a ſpiritual and heavenly kingdom, and not an earthly kingdom, as they expected; and that no body would have any ſhare in the advantages of that kingdom, but ſuch as ſhould give themſelves up to holineſs and to virtue. Theſe inſtructions concern us as well as the *Jews;* they ſhew, that without amendment of life we cannot be the diſciples of *Jeſus Chriſt;* that he receives into his church and kingdom, only thoſe who bring forth fruits meet for repentance. *John* the Baptiſt declares further, that to be in covenant with God, and to have a great appearance of zeal, ſignifies nothing; but that we muſt ſhew by the effects, and by our works, the ſincerity of our faith and repentance; and that hardened and impenitent ſinners ſhall no more eſcape divine vengeance than

hypocrites. The example of thoſe who went to hear *John* the Baptiſt, and to aſk his advice, teaches us our duty. It is the character of true penitents freely to confeſs their ſins, and to apply for inſtruction as their needs require, and follow it with docility. Beſides this, the different advice *John* the Baptiſt gave the people, the publicans and the ſoldiers, ſhews us, that every one ought faithfully to diſcharge the duties of his calling, and to avoid thoſe ſins and temptations to which it may expoſe him; particularly, that we ought to exerciſe charity, and to renounce covetouſneſs, injuſtice, violence, and fraud. What we are to conſider about the baptiſm of *Jeſus Chriſt*, is, that God thought fit he ſhould be baptized by *John*, and that upon this occaſion the Holy Ghoſt came down upon him, and a voice was heard from heaven, that *John* the Baptiſt himſelf, the *Jews*, and all men, might conſider our Lord as the Son of God, and as him whom they ought to obey. As to the genealogy of *Jeſus Chriſt*, here ſet down by St. *Luke*, we muſt obſerve that it differs from that of St. *Matthew*, becauſe St. *Matthew* gives us the genealogy of *Joſeph*, the huſband of the Holy Virgin, by *Solomon*, the ſon of king *David*; whereas St. *Luke* deduces the Virgin's pedigree by *Nathan*, who was likewiſe a ſon of *David*. *Jeſus* paſſed for the ſon of *Joſeph*, and was ſo in the eye of the law; but he deſcended from *Heli*, and was his ſon, that is, his grandſon by *Mary* his mother, who was the daughter of *Heli*. Both theſe genealogies agree in making our Lord to deſcend from king *David*, and the patriarch *Abraham*; which was one of the characters of the Meſſiah.

CHAP. IV. 1—15.

THE Evangeliſt gives us here the hiſtory of our Saviour's faſting and temptation. And how he began the exerciſe of his miniſtry in *Galilee*.

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REFLECTIONS.

I. OUR Saviour's faſt was by way of preparation to the exerciſe of his miniſtry, in which he reſembled *Moſes*, who had alſo faſted forty days, when God gave him the law on mount *Sinai*. If *Jeſus Chriſt* was pleaſed to faſt, who had no need of mortification, we ought by no means to neglect ſo uſeful an exerciſe, who ſtand in ſo great need of abſtinence and ſelf denial. II. We muſt know, that when the devil is ſaid to tempt *Jeſus*, the meaning is, that he had a mind to try whether *Jeſus* was the Son of God, and that God permitted him to be thus tempted, before he began to preach the Goſpel, and to work miracles; that the devil, being convinced that *Jeſus* was really the Son of God, he might revere his power and obey his commands, when afterwards he ſhould drive out devils from ſuch as were poſſeſſed by them. The end therefore of this temptation was, to ſhew that our Lord *Jeſus Chriſt* is the Son of God, and that he came into the world to deſtroy the kingdom of the devil. To this general conſideration, we may add two particular ones: The firſt is, that we ſhould reſiſt all temptations, and eſpecially ſuch as lead us to diſtruſt the divine aſſiſtance, or to preſumption, or to the love of glory, and the good things of this world. The ſecond conſideration relates to the means of reſiſting temptation. The retreat of *Jeſus Chriſt* into the wilderneſs, his faſting, and the manner in which he repelled the aſſaults of the devil, teach us, that retirement, faſting, prayer, and the word of God, are the moſt efficacious methods to overcome temptation, and to defeat the attempts of the enemies of our ſalvation.

CHAP. IV. 16—44.

I. OUR Lord being at *Nazareth* on a Sabbath-day, in the ſynagogue, read that prophecy of *Iſaiah*, which deſcribed God's ſending the Meſſiah, and filling him with his ſpirit, to declare to men, the glad

tidings of ſalvation; and he ſhewed that that prophecy was fulfilled in his own perſon. Then he reproached the inhabitants of that city with their unbelief, which did ſo exaſperate them, that they would have thrown him down headlong from a precipice; but he eſcaped their fury. II. He went from thence to *Capernaum*, where he cured a man poſſeſſed with a devil, as alſo the mother-in-law of St. *Peter*, and ſeveral other diſeaſed perſons; and went through *Galilee*, working miracles, and preaching the Goſpel.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE meaning and deſign of our Lord's diſcourſe in the ſynagogue of *Nazareth*, was, firſt, to ſhew, that ſince he was endued with the gifts of the Holy Ghoſt, and publiſhed to men the glad tidings of ſalvation; the prophecy of *Iſaiah*, quoted in this chapter, was fulfilled in him. II. *Jeſus* was deſirous to make the inhabitants of that city, among whom he had been brought up, ſenſible that their infidelity was the cauſe that he did not work the ſame miracles among them as he had elſewhere; in the ſame manner as formerly *Eliſjah* and *Eliſha* had wrought miracles in favour of ſtrangers, preferably to thoſe of their own nation; whence we learn, that thoſe who have the beſt means and the greateſt opportunities of knowing the truth, often make the leaſt uſe of them: and again, that God deprives thoſe of his grace and ſalutary preſence, who render themſelves unworthy of it. In the reſolution which the inhabitants of *Nazareth* took, to throw down *Chriſt* from a precipice, we have a freſh proof of that infidelity which he reproached them with, and of their ingratitude. Thus ſinners are angry with thoſe who tell them the truth, and reproach them for their faults. However, *Chriſt* gave another mark of his infinite power in eſcaping the fury of theſe wretches, who would have taken away his life. The ſeveral miracles that are related about the end of this chapter, and by which our Lord began to make himſelf known

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in *Galilee*, and the care he took to paſs through all its towns preaching the Goſpel, are ſo many proofs of his great zeal, of his unlimited power, of his love towards mankind, and of the divinity of his doctrine.

CHAP. V.

I. ST. *Luke* ſpeaks of the miraculous draught of fiſhes which St. *Peter* caught at our Lord's command. II. Of the healing of the leper. III. And of the paralytic. IV. Of the calling of *Levi*, or the apoſtle St. *Matthew*. And laſtly, of *Jeſus*'s reply to thoſe who found fault at his eating with publicans and ſinners, and at his diſciples not faſting as thoſe of *John* did.

REFLECTIONS.

WE ought to admire the power of *Chriſt*, as well as his wiſdom, in the wonderful draught of fiſhes, which we have read the hiſtory of. He wrought this miracle to confirm St. *Peter* and ſome of his companions in their vocation to the office of apoſtles; and to aſſure them that they ſhould be very ſucceſsful in their miniſtry. This miracle muſt have made the greater impreſſion on them, as our Lord did it in a matter that related to their own buſineſs; as they were fiſhers they were the more ſenſible of the greatneſs of it; and it did accordingly produce ſuch an effect in the mind of St. *Peter*, who being ſeized with admiration, reſpect, and fear, at the ſight of what had happened, immediately, with his companions St. *James* and St. *John*, forſook all to follow our Lord. In the cure of the leper, there are theſe two things to be obſerved, *viz.* That it was for his faith and prayers that he was made whole, and that our Lord ſent him to the prieſt, and commanded him to offer what was ordered by the law of *Moſes* in the like caſe. He did this the better to convince the prieſts of the certainty of the miracle he had wrought, and to ſhew that he obſerved all that God had commanded in the law. There is in the caſe

caſe of the paralytical perſon this peculiarity, that to him our Lord granted not only the cure of his bodily diſeaſe, but pardon of ſins, which he declared he had power to do: a proof to us that he had a ſupreme authority over all men: and as it was the faith of thoſe that preſented him to the Lord which moved him to work a cure upon him; this teaches us, that faith is of very great efficacy, and that he that would feel the effects of God's grace and favour muſt pray with confidence. Of all favours, the moſt neceſſary, and that which we are moſt ſure to obtain, is pardon of ſins. It is to be obſerved in the calling of St. *Matthew*, who was a publican, or a collector of taxes, that our Lord choſe his diſciples and apoſtles among perſons that were even looked upon with contempt by the *Jews*, as were the publicans. In imitation of St. *Matthew*, who left his employment as ſoon as *Jeſus* called him, we muſt learn to obey the heavenly call as ſoon as we receive it, and renounce without delay every thing that may hinder us. Our Saviour's reply to the Phariſees, who were offended at his keeping company with ſinners, teaches us, that the end of his coming was to ſave ſinners; but however, that ſinners cannot be ſaved without repentance; this likewiſe ſhews us, that thoſe who have the ſpirit of *Chriſt*, are glad when God turns ſinners from the error of their ways, and earneſtly endeavour to bring them into the right way. Laſtly, It muſt be remembered, that if our Lord did not oblige his diſciples to faſt, as the diſciples of *John* the Baptiſt did, we muſt not imagine that our Lord's ſenſe of the duty of faſting differed from that of *John*, or that the faſts which *John*'s diſciples obſerved were too difficult for *Chriſt*'s diſciples to perform. The only difference between them in this reſpect, was, that *Chriſt* converſed freely with all ſorts of people, and upon all occaſions, whereas *John* the Baptiſt lived a retired life. He declares, however, that his diſciples would be called, after his departure from them, not only to faſting, but to great ſufferings, and, that if he did not call them at that time to ſufferings, it was to ſpare their weakneſs. From hence we may gather, that

Chriſt

Chriſt was ſo far from condemning faſting and a mortified life, or from ſuffering his diſciples to hunt after pleaſures, and gratify their ſenſes, that, on the contrary, he calls them to live in ſobriety and mortification, and to bear their croſs.

CHAP. VI. 1—19.

I. OUR Lord vindicates his diſciples plucking and eating the ears of corn on the Sabbath-day. II. He cures a man that had a withered hand. And, III. He appoints the twelve apoſtles.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE reflection we are to make upon our Lord's anſwer to the Phariſees, who were offended becauſe his diſciples had plucked the ears of corn, and becauſe he himſelf had healed a man with a withered hand on the Sabbath-day, is, that the hypocritical and envious are very apt to condemn others, and are offended at that which is innocent and lawful, and ſometimes even with actions that are neceſſary and commendable; and ſcruple things of ſmall moment, while they themſelves are wanting in the moſt eſſential duties of piety and charity. We ought, therefore, to learn from hence to avoid hypocriſy, ſuperſtition, and raſh judgment; and always to cleave to the moſt weighty matters in religion, and to a ſolid piety, enlightened and attended with charity. We further learn, that no one ſhould omit actions truly good and neceſſary, under a pretence that ſome people may judge ill of them; and that the fear of offending perſons of bad diſpoſitions ſhould never keep us from our duty. What is to be obſerved on the calling of the apoſtles, is, that thoſe holy men whom the Lord made choice of to be the diſpenſers of his grace, and to convert the world, were mean and inconſiderable in the eye of the world; ſo that we ſee in this choice a proof of the divinity of the Goſpel, and of the almighty power of *Chriſt*, who endued them with gifts ſufficient for ſuch an employment.

ment. The memory of theſe firſt miniſters of the Goſpel ſhould be precious among Chriſtians, who ought to praiſe God for the great things he has done by their means; to receive the doctrine they taught, and which is contained in their writings; and laſtly, to practiſe the holy commands which they have left us, as the apoſtles of our Lord and Saviour, to whom be aſcribed all glory, praiſe, and obedience, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

CHAP. VI. 20—49.

WE have here a diſcourſe of our Lord concerning the true happineſs and miſery of man; of charity; of preſerving peace; of the love of our enemies; of raſh judgment; and of ſome other duties. He concludes by a parable, ſhewing, that it is of no uſe to hear his word, if we do not do the things which he commandeth.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS diſcourſe contains ſeveral uſeful inſtructions. The firſt is, that the poor, afflicted, deſpiſed, and perſecuted, who are at the ſame time, meek, patient, and godly, are the true diſciples of *Jeſus Chriſt*, and will be happy in this world and the next; and that on the contrary, thoſe who are thought the moſt happy, becauſe they live in plenty and in pleaſures, and becauſe they are loved and eſteemed by the world, are the moſt miſerable. The ſecond inſtruction is, that we ought to love every body, even thoſe that do not love us; to return them good for evil; to ſuffer ſome loſs or injury rather than revenge ourſelves, or engage in quarrels and law-ſuits; that if we only love thoſe who love us we are no better than heathens; but that we ought to be merciful and to do good to all; imitating therein our heavenly Father, who is kind both to the wicked and ungrateful. Our Lord has forbidden us to paſs raſh judgments; and declared that it is a very great piece of hypocriſy, to examine and cenſure other men's faults

faults without amending our own, which are oftentimes greater than thoſe of our neighbours. The fourth inſtruction is compriſed in theſe expreſſions; namely, that the *tree is known by its fruit*: and that *from the abundance of the heart the mouth ſpeaketh.* That is to ſay, that men ſhew by their behaviour and diſcourſe what they are; and that the way to order our actions and words aright, is to purify our hearts. Laſtly, *Chriſt* tells us, in the moſt poſitive manner, that he does not acknowledge for his diſciples thoſe that call him Lord, but do not obey his commands; and ſhews, by the compariſon of one houſe built on a rock, and another upon the ſand, that nothing can ſhake thoſe, who, to the knowledge of the Goſpel, join the practice of its duties; whereas thoſe that content themſelves with hearing his word, without doing that which it commands, cannot reſiſt temptations, nor attain ſalvation. Let us inceſſantly ſet before our eyes theſe divine rules of mortality preſcribed by *Jeſus Chriſt*; let us make them ſubſervient to our advancing in piety; and let us beſeech him that he himſelf will enable us to do it by his grace.

CHAP. VII. 1—23.

JESUS cures the ſervant of a Gentile captain: raiſes from the dead the ſon of a widow woman of the city of *Nain*; and anſwers the diſciples of *John* the Baptiſt, who came to aſk him whether he was the Meſſiah.

REFLECTIONS.

IN the cure of the centurion's ſervant, we may remark the humility of that officer, who, being a Gentile by birth, thought himſelf not worthy that *Chriſt* ſhould come into his houſe; as alſo the greatneſs of his faith, which appears in his belief that our Lord, without coming to ſee his ſervant, could heal him by one word only. Our Lord's extraordinary commendations of the faith of this centurion, ſaying

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" that he had not found ſuch faith among the Jews," and the miracle he wrought in his favour, ſhews very plainly, that nothing is more acceptable to him than faith and humility; and that a lively faith, and a profound ſenſe of our own unworthineſs, are the ſure means to obtain from him the effects of his mercy. The other miracle that our Lord wrought in raiſing the ſon of the widow of *Nain*, is an event in which the power of *Jeſus Chriſt* appears in a manner yet more illuſtrious, as well as his goodneſs and compaſſion for the afflicted. This hiſtory, therefore, affords very powerful motives for truſt and reliance on him; which ought to fill us with comfort, and fully convince us, that as our Lord has raiſed the dead upon ſeveral occaſions, he will certainly do it at the laſt day, according to his promiſes. Our Saviour's anſwer to *John*'s diſciples is remarkable; for, being aſked whether he was the Meſſiah, he did not give a direct anſwer, but contented himſelf with working miracles in their preſence, which proved more plainly that he was the Meſſiah, than if he had ſaid it himſelf. We ſee in this part of our Saviour's conduct, a remarkable inſtance of his wiſdom; ſince by not directly calling himſelf the Meſſiah, which he always avoided doing publickly, he did, however, every thing that was moſt proper to convince men that he was that great Redeemer which God had promiſed to ſend, and the *Jews* expected.

CHAP. VII. 24—50.

I. OUR Lord ſpeaks of *John* the Baptiſt, repreſenting the nature and excellence of his miniſtry. II. He complains, that moſt of the *Jews*, and particularly the Scribes and Phariſees, had rejected his miniſtry, as well as that of *John*. III. Being at dinner with a Phariſee, he pronounces forgiveneſs of ſins to the woman who was a ſinner.

REFLECTIONS.

THE meaning of what *Chriſt* ſaid to the *Jews* concerning the miniſtry of *John* the Baptiſt, was, that as *John* the Baptiſt had not appeared in the pomp and ſplendor which uſually attend the ambaſſadors of earthly kings, but only in quality of a great prophet; they ſhould not be ſurpriſed, if he himſelf appeared in a low condition, nor reject him on that account. By which he would give them to underſtand, that the kingdom of the Meſſiah ſhould have nothing in it carnal and worldly; and engage them to attend wholly to his ſpiritual and divine doctrines. II. *Chriſt* ſays on this occaſion, that as great as *John* the Baptiſt was, the leaſt in the kingdom of God, that is, of his true diſciples, would be greater than he; becauſe Chriſtians know more of the Meſſiah, and the reaſons for his coming, than *John* the Baptiſt himſelf did. Theſe words, which informs us of the advantages of our condition, ſhould ſtir us up to act in a manner ſuitable to them, and to render ourſelves worthy of them. III. We ſee that thoſe perſons who were the moſt contemptible, and the moſt hated among the *Jews*, were affected at the preaching of *John* the Baptiſt and our Saviour; but that the Phariſees, and thoſe that paſſed for the wiſeſt among them, had rejected thoſe exhortations, ſaying, that the life of *John* the Baptiſt was too ſtrict, and that of *Chriſt* too looſe, becauſe he often kept company with ſinners. This inſtance proves, that nothing can ſatisfy a corrupt heart. Behave with ever ſo great caution, there is no avoiding the cenſure of ſuch perſons; whilſt thoſe whoſe heart is right do zealouſly lay hold of the means which God affords for their edification and ſalvation. IV. The hiſtory of the woman that was a ſinner, has ſomething in it very remarkable, and inſtructs us in the nature and efficacy of true repentance. We find in the penitent ſinner here mentioned, a pattern of that profound humility with which great ſinners ought to bewail their ſins; and of that lively ſorrow which pierces the

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ſoul, and which expreſſes itſelf by confeſſion, by tears, and by all the tokens of a ſincere compunction, and of a holy confuſion; and which produces an intire renunciation of ſin. We ſee here with how much goodneſs the Saviour of the world receives true penitents, and pardons their faults. What he ſays to the Phariſee, who believed that *Jeſus* was not a prophet, becauſe he permitted that ſame ſinner to approach him, and to kiſs his feet; tended to convince him that he knew very well what this woman was, but that he did not reject great ſinners when they were truly penitent, and that we alſo ſhould not reject nor deſpiſe them: we muſt likewiſe take a particular notice of theſe words of our Lord; *He to whom much is forgiven will love him the more.* By which he ſhews plainly, that thoſe to whom God pardons great ſins, ought to love him with greater fervency, and that they may even attain to a conſiderable degree of holineſs. This is a doctrine very proper for the conſolation of ſinners, and which ought to animate them to the love of God, and to the practice of piety and good work.

CHAP. VIII. 1—25.

THIS part of the eighth chapter of St. *Luke*, includes three things. I. The parable of the ſeed II. The declaration our Lord makes, that his true diſciples were as dear to him as his own kindred. And, III. The ſtilling the tempeſt.

REFLECTIONS.

THE deſign of *Jeſus Chriſt* in the parable of the ſeed, was to teach thoſe that heard him, that all men do not receive the word of God after the ſame manner. The ſeed that falls by the wayſide, repreſents people that are entirely hardened, and ſuch as this word does not at all effect. By the ſeed that fell among ſtones, our Lord deſcribes the condition of thoſe on whom the word makes ſome impreſſion; who approve of it at firſt, and receive it gladly; but being not well grounded,

ed, they do not perſevere, but yield to temptation The ſeed that falls among thorns, ſets before our eyes the condition of thoſe hearers on whom the Goſpel does not produce its effect, becauſe their heart is taken up with the love of riches and pleaſures, and loaded with the cares of this life. By the ſeed that is ſown in good ground, and that brings forth much fruit, *Chriſt* denotes the effect which the word produces in thoſe who receive it in an honeſt and good heart, and bring forth fruit with perſeverance. Let us liſten ſeriouſly and continually to this parable; let us take care, as our Lord exhorts us here, after what manner we receive the word of God, and carefully examine ourſelves, to ſee whether we make a good uſe of it. This is what we are further obliged to by the declaration which our Lord made, when he was told, that his mother and his near relations deſired to ſpeak with him. We may learn from what he then ſaid, that what chiefly procures us a ſhare in his love, is a great attention and a great zeal to hear his word, and to do his will. What thus unites us to *Chriſt*, ſhould alſo ſtrictly unite us to each other. The bands of holineſs are yet ſtronger than thoſe of nature; and of all men, thoſe ought to have the greateſt ſhare of our affection and eſteem, who truly love our Lord *Jeſus Chriſt*, and keep his commandments. Laſtly, We find here, that our Lord, who had done ſo many miracles for the relief of the afflicted, was pleaſed to work a miracle in favour of his apoſtles, delivering them from great danger, when they were ready to periſh in the water. The apoſtles were in great fear upon this occaſion, and our Lord taking notice of the weakneſs of their faith, rebukes them for it, but, however, delivers them from their danger. Our weakneſſes do not hinder God from granting us the aſſiſtance we ſtand in need of, if we apply to him with ſincerity and humility. Thoſe whom God loves, may meet with great dangers, and in ſuch a condition, they may be overcome with fears, but God will never forſake them; and whatever con-

dition they are in, he favours them with his love and protection.

CHAP. VIII. 26—56.

CHRIST works three miracles: I. He cures the demoniac. And, II. The woman that had the iſſue of blood. III. Raiſes to life the daughter of *Jairus*.

REFLECTIONS.

WHAT is here related of the deplorable condition which the man poſſeſſed with a devil had for a long time been in, and the ſeveral circumſtances of his hiſtory, prove the certainty of the miracle which our Lord wrought on this occaſion, as well as his great mercy and goodneſs towards him. *Chriſt*'s giving the devils leave to enter into the herd of ſwine, is another proof of the greatneſs and reality of the miracle, and of the abſolute power he had over the devils; and a proof, likewiſe, that thoſe wicked ſpirits feared and dreaded him as their judge. *Jeſus* having delivered this man, ordered him to declare abroad how great things God had done for him. Thus ought we to acknowledge and publiſh the goodneſs of the Lord towards us, when he has granted us any ſignal favour or deliverance. We ſhould conſider farther, that though men are not now expoſed to the power of the devils, as the poſſeſſed of devils were in our Saviour's time, they may fall, however, after another manner, into the power of this enemy of our ſalvation. This is the dreadful condition of thoſe, of whom the Scripture ſays, that the devil works powerfully on them, and that they are taken captive by him at his will. In the cure of the woman who had an iſſue of blood, we are principally to attend to her ſentiments and behaviour; not daring to preſent herſelf to our Lord, to beg him to heal her, ſhe was contented to touch his garment; this ſhews her profound humility, and at the ſame time the greatneſs of her faith, and the high opinion

opinion ſhe had of the power of *Chriſt*. Her ſpeedy and miraculous cure does not only diſplay the divine virtue that was in our Saviour, but does likewiſe convince us, that with humility and faith we ſhall obtain of him every thing neceſſary to ſalvation. The more we think ourſelves unworthy of God's grace, the more ready is he to beſtow it on us. Another thing worthy to be taken notice of, is, that our Lord knew this woman had touched him, though ſhe had not made her addreſs to him; which ſhews that nothing is hid from him, and that this and all his miracles were done becauſe it was his will they ſhould be done. The reſurrection of the daughter of *Jairus*, is a ſtill more conſiderable effect of our Lord's infinite power; this miracle, with ſome others of the like nature, do not ſuffer us to doubt whether *Chriſt* could raiſe the dead, nor that he ſhall one day do the ſame for our ſakes alſo, as he has promiſed us.

CHAP. IX. 1—27.

ST. *Luke* relates, I. The ſending of the twelve apoſtles throughout *Judea*, and the inſtructions which our Lord gave them. II. The opinion that king *Herod* had of *Chriſt*. III. The miraculous multiplying of the five loaves and two fiſhes. IV. Our Lord's diſcourſe with the apoſtles when he aſked them their opinion concerning him, and forwarned them of his death, and exhorted them to prepare themſelves for ſufferings.

REFLECTIONS.

I. WHAT we are to conſider in the ſending the apoſtles is, that *Chriſt* ordered them to go before him into *Judea*, in order to ſpread abroad the glad tidings of the Meſſiah's coming, and to prepare the *Jews*, by their preaching and by their miracles, for his reception. He was likewiſe willing, by this method, to prepare them for their future preaching of the Goſpel through-

out

out the whole earth. But that which we are chiefly to obſerve in *Chriſt*'s ſpeech to them is, that the miniſtry of the ſervants of God is only profitable to thoſe that receive them; and that thoſe who reject them, draw upon themſelves a ſevere, but juſt condemnation. II. It appears from hence, Secondly, That they had a high opinion of our Lord among the *Jews*, ſince they took him for *Elias*, or ſome other of the prophets; but it is a thing worth notice, that *Herod*, who was a wicked prince, and of the ſect of the Sadducees, who denied the reſurrection, ſhould imagine that *John* the Baptiſt, whom he had put to death, was riſen again. We muſt conſider this as an effect of his remorſe of conſcience, for having put to death that holy man. Though the ungodly reject the truths of religion, they are never firmly perſuaded of the truth of their own ſentiments, and when their conſcience is rouſed, acknowledge thoſe very truths which they doubted of, and even denied before. III. The miracle of the five loaves and two fiſhes, which fed ſeveral thouſand men, is one of the moſt remarkable miracles our Saviour wrought; ſince they were all ſo many witneſſes of the ſurpriſing fact, and inſtruments in making it known to the world, which tended very much to confirm the truth of *Chriſt*'s doctrine and his divine miſſion, and induce many to believe in him. What we are to gather from our Lord's diſcourſe with his diſciples, concerning the opinion men had of him, and what they themſelves thought, is, that faith in *Chriſt* conſiſts in looking upon him as the Meſſiah and the Son of the living God. That he came into the world to ſuffer and to die. That no one can be his true diſciple, without taking up his croſs, and being always ready to make a public and a ſincere profeſſion of his faith. And laſtly, That there is nothing of greater importance to us than the ſalvation of our ſouls; and that it would be of no advantage to us to gain the whole world at the expence of our ſouls.

CHAP.

CHAP. IX. 28—62.

I. OUR Lord is transfigured in preſence of three of his apoſtles; cures a lunatic whom his apoſtles could not cure; and tells them again that he ſhould be condemned to death. II. He teaches them humility, and blames them for hindering a man from caſting out devils in his name, becauſe he followed not them. III. He cenſures the inconſiderate zeal of two of his apoſtles, and returns an anſwer to three perſons who deſired to follow him.

REFLECTIONS.

THE transfiguration of our Lord, and the glory with which the apoſtles ſaw him then ſurrounded, is a convincing proof of the truth and divinity of the Goſpel, as St. *Peter* himſelf, who was preſent at that transfiguration, takes notice in the firſt chapter of his Second Epiſtle. The preſence of *Moſes* and *Elias*, who were ſeen with *Jeſus* at that time, and who diſcourſed with him about what he was to ſuffer at *Jeruſalem*, ſhews, that this was he whoſe coming had been foretold by the prophets. God cauſed a voice to be heard from heaven, after *Moſes* and *Elias* were departed, to teach the apoſtles, and by them all mankind, that from thenceforth they were to hear *Jeſus* only; and that he was infinitely greater than *Moſes* and *Elias*, and all the prophets. Laſtly, It is from hence evident, that thoſe holy men, who had departed this life many ages before, were alive with God; and therefore we may conclude, that thoſe who have ſerved God faithfully in this life, are not annihilated by death. We ſee in the cure of the lunatic, that the faith of the apoſtles was ſtill very weak, as our Lord reproaches them; but that their faith grew ſtronger afterwards, in proportion as they were better inſtructed, and as their prejudices wore off. As the weakneſs of the apoſtles faith was the reaſon they could not cure the lunatic, ſo our ſlips and failings proceed only from the

want of faith; for which reaſon, we ought to labour to be confirmed therein, and to beſeech the Lord, that it may be more and more increaſed in us. From the leſſons of humility which our Lord gave his diſciples, let us learn, that haughty thoughts, and the love of worldly glory, are unworthy of Chriſtians; that, on the contrary, they ought to place their glory in humility, and eſteem all thoſe that believe in *Chriſt*, and that love him, even though they be mean and contemptible in the world. The anſwer that our Lord gave St. *John*, who would have hindered a man from caſting out devils in *Chriſt*'s name, becauſe that perſon did not keep company with the apoſtles, teaches us, that we muſt never oppoſe, upon any pretence, thoſe who labour ſincerely to advance the kingdom of our Lord. We ought to pay a due regard to piety wherever we find it, ſince every thing that is good muſt come from God. There are weighty reflections to be made upon the reproof which *Chriſt* gave *James* and *John*, who, being tranſported with an indiſcreet zeal, and with that averſion which the *Jews* bore to the *Samaritans*, were for bringing down fire from heaven upon thoſe *Samaritans* that had refuſed to lodge their maſter. This is a warning to us, never to ſuffer ourſelves to be overcome by a falſe and blind zeal, ſuch is always that zeal which inclines us to do evil to men; but to be always endued, as *Chriſt* himſelf was, with the ſpirit of meekneſs and forbearance towards all, and particularly towards ſuch as are in error, and that entertain ſentiments of religion different from our own. By the anſwers which *Chriſt* gave the three perſons that would have followed him, he would have them to underſtand, Firſt, that he did not promiſe the conveniencies of this life to his diſciples. Secondly, That they muſt be prepared to forſake all things for the love of him, even ſuch as are innocent and lawful, when they are a hindrance to the diſcharge of our duty. And thirdly, When men are once engaged in his ſervice, they are bound to follow that call, and not to look back to the world.

CHAP.

CHAP. X. 1—24.

I. *CHRIST* chooſes ſeventy diſciples, ſends them before him, gives them power to work miracles, and neceſſary inſtructions for their office, and denounces the judgments of God againſt thoſe cities which had not repented upon his preaching and doing miracles in them. II. The ſeventy diſciples give an account to *Chriſt* of the ſucceſs of their journey and miniſtry; upon which occaſion he foretels the deſtruction of the kingdom of Satan. III. He praiſes God that the Goſpel was preached and received by perſons of mean rank, and inconſiderable in the eye of the world; and he repreſents to his diſciples how happy they were in being inſtructed by him in the great truths of the Goſpel.

REFLECTIONS.

I. We may obſerve, that *Chriſt*, who had already choſe twelve apoſtles, was pleaſed alſo to make choice of ſeventy diſciples, and ſend them into *Judea*, that the happy tidings of the coming of the kingdom of God might be ſpread with the greater diſpatch, and that they might be the better able to go and preach the ſame doctrine throughout all the earth afterwards. The inſtructions which he gave them, ſhew, that the ſervants of God ought to exerciſe their office with fidelity, diſintereſtedneſs, and courage; that thoſe whoſe heart is right, and who are of a peaceable diſpoſition, will receive them; but that thoſe who refuſe to hear them, are inexcuſable. II. The threatenings which *Chriſt* denounces againſt the cities of *Galilee*, where he had preached and done miracles, are a warning to us, that thoſe who receive the greateſt favours from heaven, often abuſe them in a ſhameful manner; and that thoſe who have the Goſpel preached to them, and do not grow better by it, muſt expect the ſevereſt puniſhment. III. Upon what *Chriſt* ſaid to the ſeventy diſciples, when they gave him an account of the ſuc-

ceſs of their journey, and of the miracles which they had wrought, we may obſerve, that he foretold the ſpeedy ruin of the kingdom of Satan, which actually happened ſoon after by the preaching of the Goſpel. He likewiſe declared to them, that though it was a very glorious privilege to be able to caſt out devils, they ought rather to rejoice that their names were written in heaven; that is to ſay, that they were the diſciples of *Jeſus Chriſt*, and that the joys and glories of heaven were reſerved for them. The advantage of belonging to God, and of being in the number of true believers, is infinitely more conſiderable than the power of working miracles. IV. Let us alſo carefully attend to the thanks which *Chriſt* returned to God, that the Goſpel was received by the mean and humble, whilſt the great men of the world, and thoſe who are looked upon as the wiſeſt, did reject it. It is not to worldly perſons, and thoſe that have an high opinion of themſelves, that God reveals himſelf; but it is to the meek and lowly, and to ſuch as are of a ſincere and honeſt heart. V. Let us alſo obſerve what our Lord aſſured his diſciples of in ſuch ſtrong terms, that they were happy in being inſtructed by him, and in knowing thoſe truths of the Goſpel, which were not known by the ancient prophets as they were by them. This advantage we enjoy in common with them; but let us remember, at the ſame time, that if we do not make a good uſe of our happineſs, ſuch knowledge will only ſerve to render us more miſerable, and that it would be much better for us to have never enjoyed it.

CHAP. X. 25—42.

I. *CHRIST* anſwers one of the Scribes, who aſked him, what we muſt do to obtain everlaſting life. II. To teach that doctor of the law, that all men are our neighbours, he propoſes to him the parable of a man that fell among thieves. III. *Chriſt* going to lodge in the houſe of *Martha* and *Mary*, takes occaſion

ſion to commend the piety of *Mary*, who kept cloſe to him, that ſhe might hear him.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS portion of Scripture furniſhes us with three inſtructions: I. That the chief command of God, and the ſum of all religion, is to love God above all things, and our neighbours as ourſelves. This is the way to fulfil the whole law, and to diſcharge every duty; and this is what we are bound to do, if we deſire to attain to true ſubſtantial holineſs, and by that means to eternal life. II. That there is no man who is not our neighbour, and whom we ought not to love. This is what *Chriſt* teaches us by the parable of the *Jew*, who being wounded by thieves, was neither aſſiſted by the prieſt, nor by the *Levite*, though they were his own countrymen; but was relieved by a *Samaritan*, who was a ſtranger, and of a people hated by the *Jews*. The deſign of *Chriſt* was thereby to ſhew, that all men, without exception, even ſtrangers, and thoſe that do not love us, are our neighbours; that we are obliged to love them all, to do good to them, and to ſuccour the unfortunate with all our might. This was a clear and evident truth, which, however, the moſt learned of the *Jewiſh* doctors did not rightly comprehend. III. The third inſtruction is taken from that which is ſaid in this chapter of *Martha* and *Mary*. The judgment our Lord paſſed upon the behaviour of thoſe two ſiſters, teaches us, that our chief care ought to be to adhere to him, and to hearken to his word; and that the employments of this life, even ſuch as are lawful, ought never to make us neglect the thing that is moſt important of all, the one only thing neceſſary. And if we would be happy, we muſt, like *Mary*, chooſe that good part which ſhall never be taken from us.

CHAP. XI. 1—28.

I. *CHRIST* inſtructs his diſciples about prayer. II. He cures a demoniack, and returns an anſwer

anſwer to the Phariſees, who ſaid that it was by the power of Satan he caſt out devils. III. He propoſes the parable of a man into whom the evil ſpirit enters again, after it had gone out of him. IV. He ſpeaks of the happineſs of thoſe who hear his word and keep it.

REFLECTIONS.

THE firſt inſtruction which the Saviour of the world here gives us, relates to prayer, and particularly to the Lord's Prayer. This Divine Prayer having *Jeſus Chriſt* for its Author, and including all that is moſt important for us to aſk: First, With reſpect to the glory of God, and in the next place to our own wants, as well for the body as the ſoul, we ought to preſent it to God with all poſſible reverence and attention; and at the ſame time, with an extraordinary degree of confidence; ſince, when we aſk what our Lord has commanded us to aſk, we cannot doubt but our prayers, as to the matter of them, are agreeable to the will of God: Our Lord teaches us, moreover, that if when we deſire any thing of men with great earneſtneſs, we prevail upon them to grant our petitions, much more ſhall we, by our prayers, obtain from God, who is our Father, true, that is, ſpiritual bleſſings; all this ought to ſtir us up to pray with earneſtneſs and zeal, and not to faint in this holy exerciſe. II. The blaſphemy of the Phariſees, who attributed to the devil the miracles which *Chriſt* wrought by virtue of the Spirit of God, teaches us, that men who have a wicked heart, defeat the moſt powerful means made uſe of by God to overcome the hardneſs of their hearts, and that they are even more and more confirmed in their wickedneſs. III. The ſimilitude of the evil ſpirit, that enters again into the man after he had been caſt out, ſhews what would happen to the *Jews*, who had not laid hold of the advantage of *Chriſt*'s preſence, and of his miracles; namely, that they would fall into greater obdurateneſs, and would feel the divine vengeance; that is likewiſe what happens

pens to all ſuch, who, after having received the grace of God, do reſiſt its motions, and engage again in ſin. Let us learn, laſtly, from the anſwer which our Saviour made to the woman that admired his diſcourſes, that the moſt glorious and the moſt advantageous thing to ourſelves, is to hear the word of God, and to obſerve what it commands, as it is expreſſed in theſe words, *Bleſſed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it.*

CHAP. XI. 29—54.

I. OUR Lord reproves the unbelief of the *Jews*, by ſetting before them the example of the *Ninevites*, and of the queen of *Sheba*. II. He tells them, that ſuch their unbelief could not hinder his doctrine, which was a light to lighten mankind, from being preached; and he ſhews, that in order to receive any benefit from it, our eye muſt be pure and ſingle; which is as much as to ſay, our minds muſt be free and diſengaged from prejudice and paſſion. III. Being invited to dine with a Phariſee, he declaims againſt the Scribes and Phariſees, reproaching them for their hypocriſy, pride, and infidelity, and threatening them with the judgments of God.

REFLECTIONS.

WE are taught by the example of the queen of *Sheba*, and that of the *Ninevites*, thoſe to whom God has granted a greater degree of light, and more conſiderable opportunities of ſalvation, have reaſon to expect a more ſevere condemnation if they neglect thoſe advantages, and perſiſt in their infidelity. II. What our Saviour ſaid of the candle ſet in a candleſtick, and of the eye, which is the light of the body, ſignifies theſe two things: one is, that he had made known his doctrine to his diſciples, to the end they might make it known to the world; and the other, that our minds muſt be rightly diſpoſed, and our hearts pure and ſincere, in order to receive and to underſtand

ſtand the excellency of this doctrine. III. We have ſeen our Lord reproaching the Phariſees for obſerving an external purity, for affecting great appearance of virtue, piety, zeal, and humility, and for ſhewing a great reſpect to the memory of the prophets, whilſt their hearts were filled with pride and covetouſneſs, whilſt they perſecuted thoſe whom God had ſent to them, and hindered men from believing in him; for which reaſon, he threatens them with total deſtruction. Hereby we may ſee in how great guilt men involve themſelves, when they ſuffer pride and covetouſneſs to poſſeſs their hearts, when they reject the word of God, and turn others away from faith and holineſs, which is the higheſt pitch of wickedneſs. Above all, this diſcourſe of our Lord teaches us, that God abhors hypocriſy; that thoſe who go no farther than to an outward purity, and neglect that of the heart and conſcience, are an abomination to him. Let us therefore ſtudy true holineſs. Let us remember that God chiefly has reſpect to the inward parts; and that the only way to pleaſe him, is to have an upright heart, and to be filled with charity; to be truly humble, to receive his word with ſubmiſſion, and to contribute all that in us lies to bring other men to faith and ſalvation.

CHAP. XII. 1—34.

THIS chapter contains an excellent diſcourſe of our Lord, in which, I. He exhorts his diſciples not to diſſemble the truths which they had learned of him, but to declare them publickly; and that the fear of men might not hinder them from ſo doing, he warns them to fear none but God, and to make an open profeſſion of the truth; and promiſes to defend and aſſiſt them when they ſhould appear before the great men of the world. II. Upon occaſion of a man who had a diſpute with another about an inheritance, he declaims againſt covetouſneſs, ſhewing by the parable of a rich man, the folly of ſuch as care for nothing but heaping

heaping up wealth; and telling them, that they ſhould not be anxious for the neceſſaries of life, but depend upon Providence, and be chiefly ſolicitous for what relates to the kingdom of God. III. He aſſures his diſciples, that though they were weak, and but few in number, they ſhould not fear the want of any thing that was neceſſary for them; and he exhorts them to make a right uſe of worldly goods.

REFLECTIONS.

CHRIST inſtructs us here about the profeſſion of truth, and the love of worldly goods. I. Upon the firſt head, we ſee that Chriſtians, and eſpecially the miniſters of *Jeſus Chriſt*, ought to make a public profeſſion of the truth, without ſtanding in fear of men; ſince men can only kill the body, whereas God can caſt both ſoul and body into hell. Whereby our Lord, in the cleareſt manner, ſettles the diſtinction between ſoul and body, the immortality of the ſoul, and the puniſhments of the wicked in the life to come. Our Lord declares moreover, that God watches over thoſe who fear him, and who ſuffer for his ſake; that he aſſiſts them by his ſpirit; that at the laſt day he will own them for his, that ſhall have had the courage to call themſelves his diſciples; but that he will not own thoſe who, through fear of death, ſhall not have dared to make an open confeſſion of their faith. Theſe are very powerful conſiderations, to animate us to a free and ſincere profeſſion of Chriſtianity. II. Let us ſeriouſly reflect upon what our Lord ſays concerning the love of worldly goods, and upon the parable of the man that had heaped up great wealth, but died at the time he thought to enjoy it. *Chriſt* was willing to ſhew thereby, that it is a great folly to care only for gathering of riches, which we muſt leave when we come to die, and to neglect the acquiring heavenly goods, which are ſolid and eternal. He has likewiſe exhorted us not to diſquiet ourſelves for the wants of the body, but to truſt to Providence, which provides

provides for the neceſſities of all creatures; to ſeek, before all things, the kingdom of God; and inſtead of engaging all our care for the things of the world, and ſetting our hearts upon them, to employ our wealth in alms, in order to ſecure to ourſelves the poſſeſſion of an everlaſting treaſure.

CHAP. XII. 35—59.

I. *CHRIST* exhorts his diſciples to watch, and to be continually prepared for his coming. II. He repreſents to them, that the duties of which he had diſcourſed, related to them in a particular manner; they being as it were ſtewards, appointed in the houſe of their maſter, for the inſtruction of others; and that having received a greater knowledge of the will of God, they would be treated with greater ſeverity if they did not perform it. III. He warns them, that great troubles would ariſe in the world upon the account of his doctrine. IV. He laments the blindneſs of the *Jews*, who did not acknowledge that the time of the Meſſiah was come; and he exhorts them to lay hold of that opportunity, and to reconcile themſelves with God whilſt it was in their power.

REFLECTIONS.

LET us learn from hence, I. That ſince we are ignorant when *Chriſt* will come, and may be called every moment to give up our accounts to him, we ought always to watch, and to apply ourſelves inceſſantly to our duty, to the end, that when he comes he may find us employed in well doing. II. That thoſe to whom God has given the knowledge of himſelf, and chiefly the miniſters of the church, are bound to uſe it for the good of others, and to the glory of their maſter, if they would not be puniſhed as unfaithful ſervants; that, in general, he who knows the will of God, and does it not, ſhall be treated with greater ſeverity and, that God will require a greater account of thoſe, to whom he ſhall have granted more light

and

and more grace. III. What our Lord ſays, that he was come to kindle fire and diviſion in the world, does not ſignify that he came with ſuch a deſign, nor that the Goſpel tends to ſet men at variance; ſince, on the contrary, the coming of *Jeſus Chriſt*, and the Goſpel, have no other end, but to cauſe peace to reign: but his meaning was, that mankind, by their malice, would take occaſion from his doctrine to hate and perſecute one another. Our Lord warns his diſciples of this, that they might not be ſtaggered when the thing ſhould come to paſs; wherefore neither ought we to be any more ſurprized, when we ſee that troubles ariſe in the world upon the account or pretence of religion. IV. *Jeſus* told the *Jews*, that they might eaſily diſcern the time of the manifeſtation of the Meſſiah was come; but we have much more reaſon to be convinced of this truth, becauſe every thing that has happened ſince that time, has tended to confirm it. We ſhould therefore be entirely inexcuſable if we did not make a better uſe than the *Jews* did of the happineſs we enjoy in living at a time when the mercy of God is ſo clearly revealed; and haſten to make our peace with him, and to prevent his judgments, before we are called to appear in his preſence.

CHAP. XIII.

I. OUR Lord exhorts the *Jews* to take warning from that which happened to certain *Galileans*, whom *Pilate* had put to death whilſt they were offering their ſacrifices, and from thoſe eighteen perſons who had been killed by the fall of a tower. II. To this end he propoſes the parable of the barren fig-tree. III. He cures a woman that had been ill eighteen years, and ſo bent that ſhe could not ſtand upright. IV. He propoſes the ſimilitude of a grain of muſtard-ſeed, and of leaven. V. Anſwers the queſtion that was aſked him, whether there were but few that would be ſaved; exhorts us to enter betimes into the way of ſalvation; and foretels, that the unbelieving *Jews*, who had

had not improved by his preſence, ſhould be ſhut out of the kingdom of God, whilſt other nations ſhould be admitted into it. VI. Being informed that *Herod* ſought his life, he declares, he did not fear that cunning and artful prince; tells them, his miniſtry was drawing towards a concluſion, and that he ſhould really be put to death in a ſhort time; but that he ſhould ſuffer death in *Jeruſalem*, and not in *Galilee*, where *Herod* reigned; upon which account he deplores the ingratitude, obduracy, and deſtruction of that city.

REFLECTIONS.

CHRIST teaches us in this chapter, that we muſt not imagine, that thoſe who have ſome great misfortunes befal them, are always the moſt criminal; nor that thoſe are better than others whom God is pleaſed to ſpare; but that he often bears with the guilty for wiſe and good reaſons, whilſt he afflicts others who are not ſo great ſinners as they; wherefore, inſtead of condemning thoſe whom God viſits, and flattering ourſelves, we ought to repent and grow better by the misfortunes that happen to them, leſt we ſhould be handled more ſeverely than they. The meaning of the parable of the barren fig-tree was, that God, who had already ſhewn great patience towards the *Jews*, did then make uſe of the laſt means for their converſion, by cauſing them to be called to repentance by *Chriſt* himſelf; after which they were to be deſtroyed, as it actually happened in a few years. This parable ſets before us God's patience towards ſinners, making uſe of the moſt efficacious methods to bring them to repentance; but that by their obſtinacy and impenitence, they draw upon themſelves the utmoſt miſeries. *Chriſt* having healed a woman that went double for eighteen years together, there were ſome who were offended at his doing this miracle on the ſabbath-day. What *Chriſt* ſays to convince them of their ignorance, as well as of their wickedneſs, teaches us, that the practice of charity and good works is the moſt neceſ-

ſary

ſary thing in religion; that theſe duties are always in ſeaſon; and that we ſhould let ſlip no occaſion of diſcharging them, though there ſhould be people of ſo evil a diſpoſition as to be offended at them. The parables of the muſtard ſeed, and of the leaven, ſignify, that though the Goſpel was received by very few, whilſt our Saviour was in the world, and the beginnings of his kingdom were very weak, it ſhould be eſtabliſhed in all places, and in a very ſhort time; as it fell out accordingly: which proves the divinity of the Goſpel. We ought carefully to meditate upon the anſwer which our Lord returned to thoſe that aſked him, whether there would be but few people ſaved; *Strive*, ſays he, *to enter in at the ſtrait gate: for many, I ſay unto you, will ſeek to enter in, and ſhall not be able.* Theſe words teach us, that inſtead of putting vain and curious queſtions about any thing which God has reſerved the knowledge of to himſelf, and particularly about the ſalvation of others, our principal care ought to be to attain it ourſelves; that we ought to take continual pains for it, and to begin early; that when the opportunity is loſt, we ſhall not be admitted any more; and that then, all that will remain to the wicked for their part, will be nothing but remorſe and deſpair, to ſee themſelves excluded from the bleſſings of heaven through their own fault. We have ſeen that our Lord feared neither the craft nor cruelty of *Herod*, becauſe he knew that he was not to die in *Galilee*, but at *Jeruſalem*. This ſhews us, that wicked men cannot always execute their own deſigns, much leſs hinder what God has purpoſed, and that we need fear nothing when we walk in our calling. Laſtly, the tenderneſs wherewith our Lord laments the ingratitude and deſtruction of *Jeruſalem*, by ſaying, that he would have ſcreened the *Jews* from the judgments of God, but they would not; ſhews very plainly, that God has no other views nor deſigns, with regard to men, but thoſe of love; and that no evil befals them but what they bring upon themſelves, by deſpiſing his goodneſs, and by ſlighting and rejecting the offers of his grace.

CHAP.

CHAP. XIV.

I. OUR Lord dining with a Phariſee, cures a dropſical perſon; and proves, that men ought not to be offended becauſe that miracle was done on a ſabbath-day. II. He gives leſſons of humility and charity to thoſe who ſat at table with him. III. He propoſes to them the parable of the feaſt, to which thoſe that were invited would not go. IV. He declares, that thoſe who would be his diſciples, ſhould be ready to forſake all that was moſt dear to them, and even their lives; and ſhews, by two ſimilitudes, the neceſſity of that duty.

REFLECTIONS.

THE cure which *Chriſt* granted to the man that had the dropſy, ſhews, that he was always ready to do good and to relieve the afflicted; and that there was no ſort of diſtemper which he did not cure; and what he ſaid to thoſe who did not approve of his working miracles upon the ſabbath-day, ſhews, that we muſt avoid hypocriſy and raſh cenſures, and lay hold upon all occaſions that offer, to do works of kindneſs and charity. The ſecond leſſon relates to humility and charity; *Chriſt* recommends both thoſe duties, when he tells us, that they who endeavour to exalt themſelves ſhall be abaſed before God, and even before men; whilſt thoſe that humble themſelves ſhall be exalted: and when he exhorts us not to imitate thoſe worldly people, who only welcome the rich and their friends, but deſpiſe and neglect the poor and unfortunate. The parable of the feaſt ſignifies, that the *Jews*, and eſpecially the chief among them, were to be rejected for not embracing the invitation which God made them by *Jeſus Chriſt* and his Apoſtles; and that thoſe who were the moſt deſpiſed, and even the Gentiles themſelves, ſhould receive thoſe favours which the *Jews* had rejected. This alſo relates to Chriſtians, who do not anſwer their call, and who, upon frivolous excuſes,

excuſes, and from the attachment they have to the things of the earth, neglect the offers of divine mercy, and by this means loſe the right they have to ſalvation. Laſtly, *Chriſt* warns us moſt expreſsly, that, in order to be his diſciples, we muſt firſt learn to renounce every thing that may hinder us from following him. It is with this view, that he propoſes the parable of a man that was going to build a tower, and that of one king who was going to fight with another. By which he teaches us, that we muſt not lightly or inconſiderately engage in his ſervice; and that before we aſſume the name of Chriſtians, and take that profeſſion and vow upon us, we ſhould examine ourſelves, and ſee whether we are firmly reſolved to be faithful to him; and whether we ſhall have the courage to reſiſt temptation, to bear our croſs, and uſe our utmoſt endeavours to bring others to faith and piety by our prudence and good examples.

CHAP. XV.

THE Phariſees being offended at our Saviour's eating with ſinners, he propoſes three parable to them. I. That of the loſt ſheep. II. That of the piece of money that was loſt. And, III. That of the prodigal ſon. His deſign was to ſhew, by theſe three parables, that God calls ſinners to repentance, and that therefore the Phariſees were to blame to find fault with his keeping company with thoſe people.

REFLECTIONS.

THE three ſimilitudes contained in this chapter, tend all to the ſame purpoſe; which is, to ſet before our eyes the great mercies of God to ſinners, and his endeavour to bring them to repentance; and to ſhew, that as their converſion is very acceptable to him, and the holy angels are rejoiced at it, all ſuch as love God ought likewiſe to be glad, and even to contribute every thing in their power towards it; and not to be ſorry or jealous, as were the Phariſees, who could not bear

bear to ſee *Jeſus* in the company of men of an evil life. This is what is chiefly denoted by the parable of the prodigal ſon, by whom our Lord repreſents thoſe that were great ſinners, or counted ſuch; the return of that ſon to his father's houſe, repreſents the converſion of ſuch ſinners. The tenderneſs with which his father received him, ſhews, that God takes pleaſure in the repentance and amendment of ſinners, and that he is full of goodneſs towards them. The jealouſy and concern which the eldeſt ſon ſhewed, becauſe his brother had been received ſo kindly and joyfully, repreſents the temper of thoſe Phariſees who thought themſelves better than other men, and who were offended at our Lord's eating and keeping company with publicans and ſinners. This is the meaning of that inſtructive parable, which furniſhes us with ſeveral very uſeful reflections. We there obſerve how ſinners err from the right way, and their criminal abuſe of the grace of God; we ſee, likewiſe, the goodneſs of God in chaſtiſing them, in order to bring them back to their duty; the return of thoſe that come to God by repentance; the pardon which he grants them, and the joy that their converſion ought to excite in all pious and charitable minds. To this parable all of us ought moſt ſeriouſly to attend; reading it carefully over and over, and meditating upon all its parts; but ſinners, eſpecially, are bound to apply this parable to themſelves, that they may be encouraged thereby to return to God by a ſpeedy and ſincere repentance.

CHAP. XVI.

I. *CHRIST* ſhews, by the parable of the unfaithful ſteward, the uſe we ought to make of the good things of the world. II. Next, he repreſents, that the love of riches is very dangerous; and reproves the Phariſees for their covetouſneſs, and for oppoſing the eſtabliſhment of the kingdom of God from the time of *John* the Baptiſt. III. And laſtly, to illuſtrate and confirm what he had ſaid about the uſe of riches, he adds the parable of the wicked rich man.

REFLEC-

REFLECTIONS.

THIS whole ſixteenth chapter of St. *Luke*, tends to teach us how we muſt uſe the good things of this world. What is here ſaid of this unfaithful ſteward, who, to make himſelf friends, diſcharged his maſter's debtors of part of what they owed him, muſt not be underſtood as if *Chriſt* commended the proceedings of that man, ſince ſuch an action would be a manifeſt injuſtice and breach of truſt. He only deſigned to teach us thereby, that as this ſteward raiſed himſelf friends by the goods of his maſter, before he left his ſervice, ſo we ought to ſecure for ourſelves an entrance into a better life, by employing our wealth to pious and charitable purpoſes. It is to ſtir us up to this duty, that *Chriſt* ſays, that thoſe who cannot make a right uſe of the corruptible things of this life, do thereby ſhew that they are unworthy to poſſeſs heavenly things. It is with the ſame view he declares, that we cannot ſerve God, and ſet our hearts upon riches at the ſame time; this he proves by the example of the Phariſees, who were covetous; and who, although they had a very high eſteem of themſelves, were abominable in the ſight of God, and the profeſſed enemies of his kingdom. But this is what he particularly aims at in the parable of the wicked rich man and *Lazarus;* whereby our Lord repreſents what happens to thoſe, who, inſtead of aſſiſting the miſerable, employ their wealth in gratifying their own luxury and ſenſuality. Our Lord plainly intimates, that pomp, effeminacy, a love of pleaſures, and a want of charity, lead men to hell and deſtruction, even without the commiſſion of great and enormous crimes. Beſides which, we ſee in this parable, that as the condition of men is very different in this life, ſo it will likewiſe be after death; and that we cannot judge of the happineſs or miſery of men, by what happens to them in this world; we diſcover that the righteous enjoy ſweet repoſe after their death, whilſt the wicked are tormented; and that the condition of them both is unchangeable. The anſwer which

the patriarch *Abraham* returned to the wicked rich man, who prayed him to ſend *Lazarus* to his brethren, is a leſſon to us, that God gives us, during this life, by his holy word, means ſufficient to avoid deſtruction; that thoſe who do not lay hold of theſe means, are without excuſe; that they muſt not expect that God ſhould work miracles for their converſion; and that although he ſhould, yet ſuch miracles will not convince them. All theſe inſtructions are of the utmoſt importance, and we can do nothing more uſeful than ſeriouſly to reflect upon them.

CHAP. XVII.

CHRIST ſpeaks, I. Of offences, of forgiving injuries, of the efficacy of faith, and of the obligation we are under to do what God commands us, without pretending to merit thereby. II. He cures the ten lepers. III. He anſwers the Phariſees, who aſked him when the kingdom of God ſhould come; and tells them, that the kingdom of God was already among them, though they did not obſerve it. IV. Hence he takes occaſion to warn thoſe that heard him not to follow falſe chriſts; and to tell them, that the time would come, that they ſhould regret the loſs of thoſe advantages which they then enjoyed, and ſhould be overtaken by the judgments of God, as men were by the flood, and the inhabitants of *Sodom* were by the fire that deſtroyed them all.

REFLECTIONS.

THE inſtructions contained in this chapter, are the following: I. That the giving ſcandal or offence, is a great ſin; that as men are made, it muſt needs be that offences come; but that thoſe who are the occaſion of them ſhall receive the puniſhment. II. That we ought not to bear any grudge againſt thoſe that offend us, but that we muſt pardon them, and even pardon them always, though they ſhould injure us very often. III. That faith being as neceſſary, in order to pleaſe God

God, and obtain ſalvation, as it was formerly to work miracles, we ſhould ſtrengthen ourſelves more and more therein, and, with the apoſtle, beſeech the Lord to increaſe our faith. IV. That being the ſervants of God, we ought to do all that ſuch a maſter commands us, and to do it with zeal, and, at the ſame time, with deep humility, remembering that we are but unworthy and unprofitable ſervants, that we do no more than part of our duty; that therefore we can plead no merit; and that if God vouchſafes to reward our obedience, it is in conſequence of his pure favour and bounty. V. The principal reflection to be made upon the cure of the ten lepers, is, that there was but one who came back to thank *Chriſt*, and to give glory to God; and that this perſon was a *Samaritan*, who had more piety and gratitude than the reſt, who were *Jews*. Men wiſh to be delivered when they are in pain or ſufferings, but as ſoon as they have obtained what they deſire, moſt of them preſently forget the favour God has granted them, and become unthankful. Thoſe who are ſincerely affected with the mercies God beſtows upon them, treaſure them up in their memory, and expreſs their acknowledgment and love to him, not only by continual thankſgivings, but chiefly by their obedience, and by the good uſe they make of his favours. What *Chriſt* ſaid to the *Jews*, that the kingdom of God was not to come with ſplendor; that it was already come, and even was among them, is enough to ſhew, that the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour *Jeſus Chriſt* is altogether ſpiritual and heavenly; and that thoſe who, like us, are ſo happy as to have this kingdom in the midſt of them, ſhould take care that they do not fall into the ſame ſin as did the *Jews*, which was, not to acknowledge their happineſs, nor to make a right uſe of it; which, nevertheleſs, is but too uſual. For which purpoſe, let us conſider what our Lord adds in this chapter; namely, that the *Jews* would ſoon repent their neglecting the advantage of his preſence, and that they would be overtaken by divine vengeance, as the inhabitants of the firſt world

were by the deluge, and as the fire from heaven overtook the people of *Sodom*. This warning concerns us as well as the *Jews*: those among us who have slighted the precious advantages we enjoy, and the season of God's forbearance and mercy, will be thus surprised in their blindness and security, and will perish in their impenitency. Since now our Lord has forewarned us of these things, let us reflect upon them continually; and, in expectation of his coming, let us live in watchfulness, in prayer, and in the exercise of every good work, as he himself advises.

CHAP. XVIII. 1—17.

I. OUR Lord proposes the parable of the unjust judge. II. That of the Pharisee and the Publican. And, III. He lays his hands upon little children that were brought to him.

REFLECTIONS.

ST. *Luke* informs us, at the very entrance of this eighteenth chapter, that the end of the parable of the unjust judge, is to teach us, that we must pray always, and without fainting. This is what we learn by our Saviour's expressions; namely, that if men, and even men as wicked as that unjust judge, suffer themselves to be overcome at last by prayers and repeated solicitations, God, who is righteousness and goodness itself, will much more hearken to the prayers that are offered up to him with zeal and perseverance. But the chief aim of our Lord, was to convince us thereby, that God hears the cries and prayers of his elect, and that he will take severe vengeance on all such as unjustly oppress them. By the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican, *Christ* would give us to understand, that such who had a favourable opinion of themselves, like the Pharisees, and despised others, were very odious to the Lord, by reason of their pride and hypocrisy; and that those who are looked upon as the greatest sinners, become the objects of his mercy, when they are possessed with

with profound humility, and ſincerely repent, like the Publican who is here mentioned; who, ſtanding afar off, *would not liſt up ſo much as his eyes to heaven, but ſmote upon his breaſt, ſaying, God be merciful to me a ſinner!* Beſides which, the example of this Phariſee, who boaſted that he was neither an extortioner, nor unjuſt, nor an adulterer; that he faſted twice a week, and gave tithes of all that he poſſeſſed, but who was not juſtified before God, proves, that great and crying ſins are not the only hindrances of men's ſalvation; that men may be free from great crimes, and have even an appearance of piety, and yet be rejected by God, if their heart be filled with pride, covetouſneſs, or other ſecret paſſions. Laſtly, We may make three obſervations upon our Lord's laying his hands upon the children that were brought to him, and his praying for them. The firſt is, That the age of little children does not hinder our Lord from loving and bleſſing them. The ſecond, That in devoting them to God by prayer, and the ordinance of baptiſm, we conform ourſelves to what *Chriſt* did on this occaſion. The third, That the kingdom of God is only reſerved for ſuch as are children in innocence, meekneſs, and ſimplicity, and who receive the Goſpel with ſuch holy diſpoſitions.

CHAP. XVIII. 18—43.

I. OUR Lord returns an anſwer to a rich young man, who aſked him what he muſt do to be ſaved. From whence he takes occaſion to ſay, that riches would obſtruct the ſalvation of many people; and he makes glorious promiſes to thoſe that will forſake worldly goods for the love of him. II. He foretels his ſufferings. And, III. He reſtores ſight to a blind man near *Jericho*.

REFLECTIONS.

WHAT we are to gather from the diſcourſe between our Lord and the rich young man mentioned in this chapter, is, I. That we cannot obtain everlaſting life, without

without keeping the commandments of God. II. That there are certain ſeaſons wherein we are bound to forſake all we have, and expoſe ourſelves to poverty and perſecution. III. The ſurpriſe and ſorrow that ſeized this young man, after hearing what *Chriſt* had ſaid to him, verifies our Saviour's remark upon this occaſion, that the good things of this life are often a great obſtacle to our ſalvation; becauſe thoſe who have them, commonly ſet their hearts upon them. Whence it appears, IV. That if we be not called, as were the apoſtles, to leave all thing to follow *Chriſt*, we ought to avoid ſetting our affections upon the periſhable things of this life, and employ them in aſſiſting the miſerable; and then we ſhall partake, both in this life and the next, of the rewards that our Saviour promiſes thoſe that ſhall have renounced the love of riches. It is next to be obſerved, that in proportion as the time of our Saviour's death drew near, he ſpoke more plainly of it to the apoſtles, to the end they might be leſs ſurpriſed at it: But the apoſtles, notwithſtanding what he had ſaid to them on ſeveral occaſions, could not comprehend that he was to die; which proceeded from their prejudices, and the opinion they had taken up, that, as the Meſſiah, he was to reign glorioufly here upon earth. It muſt be obſerved, upon giving ſight to the blind man here ſpoken of, that *Chriſt*, by curing this man, who ſtiled him the ſon of *David*, which was another name among the *Jews* for Meſſiah, proved that he was really the Meſſiah. Laſtly, *Chriſt* wrought new miracles towards the end of his life, and as he drew near to *Jeruſalem*, in order to give freſh proofs of his divine miſſion to his diſciples, and to the people; and in order alſo to leſſen the offence which his croſs and his death was quickly to give them.

CHAP. XIX. 1—28.

THIS part of the chapter comprehends two heads. I. The hiſtory of the converſion of *Zaccheus*. II. The parable of the ten pieces of money.

REFLEC-

REFLECTIONS.

THERE are three things chiefly to be obſerved in the hiſtory of *Zaccheus*. The firſt, That *Jeſus Chriſt* came to call ſinners to repentance; and that thoſe perſons whom the *Jews* looked upon as great ſinners, and with whom they would keep no correſpondence, ſuch, for inſtance, as the publicans, ſhould be received into covenant with God. The ſecond, That *Chriſt* communicates himſelf to thoſe that ſeek him; and that when he offers himſelf to us, and calls us to him, we ſhould obey his call with readineſs and joy, as *Zaccheus* did. The third, That thoſe who are poſſeſſed of ill-gotten goods, ought to reſtore them; and that the rich are particularly obliged to be charitable to the poor. As for the parable of the man that was going a long journey, and left ten pounds, that is to ſay, ſeveral ſums of money in the hands of his ſervants, our Lord propoſed it, as St. *Luke* obſerves, I. To undeceive thoſe that thought he would be declared king, and that his kingdom would be attended with worldly pomp and ſplendor. And, II. To make them comprehend that he ſhould be rejected; but that ſuch as would not ſubmit themſelves to him, ſhould feel the effects of his power, and undergo the puniſhment of their rebellion; whilſt thoſe that have ſerved him faithfully ſhall be exalted to great glory. The uſe we are to make of this parable, is to obſerve from thence, firſt, that God grants us his light and grace, to the end that every one of us, according to his ſtation, may improve them to his glory, and to the ſalvation of others. Secondly, That ſome make a right uſe of his grace, and others abuſe it. Thirdly, That when our Lord ſhall come to judge mankind, he will glorioufly reward thoſe that ſhall have employed his gifts in the manner moſt agreeable to his intentions, but will puniſh with rigour and juſtice, the ingratitude and treachery of thoſe that have abuſed them.

CHAP.

CHAP. XIX. 29—48.

I. *CHRIST* makes his royal entry into *Jeruſalem.*
II. He weeps for the deſtruction of that city.
III. He drives out of the temple thoſe that profaned it.

REFLECTIONS.

CHRIST was pleaſed to make his entry into *Jeruſalem*, the *Sunday* before his death, to ſhew that he was that king ſpoken of by the prophets; but he did it after a very plain manner, riding upon a young aſs, that it might appear that his kingdom was not of this world. This circumſtance muſt have made the greater impreſſion upon the apoſtles, as *Chriſt*, telling them where they ſhould find the aſs, had given them a new proof of his infinite knowledge. We ought very ſeriouſly to reflect upon this event, in which we ſo ſenſibly perceive the glory of *Jeſus Chriſt*, and, at the ſame time, his perfect meekneſs; and it ſhould engage us to rejoice, and praiſe the Lord, as did thoſe who formerly attended *Chriſt*, when they ſaw his miracles, if we duly conſider what our Saviour has done to redeem mankind, and eſtabliſh his kingdom in the world. We are next to obſerve, that when our Saviour came in this manner to *Jeruſalem*, he lamented with tears the deſolation of that city, and the calamities that were ſoon to fall upon the *Jews*, becauſe they had miſtaken and neglected the time of God's gracious viſitation. This was a very plain proof of the goodneſs of the Lord, even to ſuch as had rejected him; and who, that very week, were to crucify him; and it ſhews us likewiſe, that none periſh but through their own fault, and becauſe they do not lay hold of the ſeaſon in which God viſits them, and offers them his grace; and that therefore we ſhould know the things that belong to our peace before they be hid from our eyes. Laſtly, *Chriſt*, by driving out of the temple thoſe that ſold and traded in it, made appear his divine authority, as well as his great zeal. This

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action of our Saviour ſuggeſts two reflections: One is, that we grievouſly offend God, and expoſe ourſelves to his wrath, when we behave ourſelves irreverently in places ſet apart for public worſhip, and when our worſhip of him is falſe and hypocritical: this is infinitely more odious to him than the abuſe that was introduced among the *Jews*, of buying and ſelling in the temple the things neceſſary for ſacrifices. The other is, that we ought, in imitation of our Saviour, to oppoſe impiety and irreligion, and promote with zeal the glory of God, and the cauſe of religion.

CHAP. XX. 1—18.

I. *CHRIST* anſwers the chief among the *Jews*, who examined him whence he had his authority. And, II. propoſes to them the parable of the huſbandmen.

REFLECTIONS.

WE are to remark, that when the *Jews* demanded of *Chriſt* whence he received his authority, our Lord, knowing that this queſtion did not proceed from a ſincere deſire to be informed, but only from a deſign to ſurpriſe him, did not think proper to anſwer them. But to convince them that their ignorance was affected and malicious, and that they might eaſily have diſcerned that his authority came from God, he aſked them whether the baptiſm of *John* was from heaven, or of men; to which they made no reply, not daring to ſpeak their thoughts. The ſilence of the Phariſees was a ſufficient proof of their hypocriſy and malice, and that a direct anſwer would not have ſatisfied them. God never refuſes to reveal himſelf to thoſe who have an honeſt heart, and ſincerely deſire to know the truth. But thoſe who only ſeek a pretence to reject it, are given up to their ignorance and perverſeneſs, eſpecially when they have already had ſufficient means of knowing the truth, and have rejected it. By the ſimilitude of the huſbandmen our Lord deſigned figuratively

ratively to repreſent, 1. That the chief of the *Jews* would crucify him, as their fathers had killed the prophets. 2. That he ſhould nevertheleſs become the ſupreme head and king of the church. 3. That the *Jews* would ſhortly be overtaken with God's judgments, and deprived of his covenant. 4. That the Goſpel would be preached to the Gentiles with ſurpriſing ſucceſs, and that they ſhould enjoy all the privileges of being in covenant with God. This prophetic parable was clearly explained in the glory to which our Lord, after his reſurrection and aſcenſion, was exalted, by the deſtruction of *Jeruſalem*, the diſperſion of the *Jews*, and the calling of the Gentiles. However, that which befel the *Jews*, ought to be an example to us, and teach us, that Chriſtians who deſpiſe God's grace, and diſobey the Goſpel, ſhall not go unpuniſhed, ſince they no leſs reject *Chriſt*, than the *Jews* themſelves did formerly.

CHAP. XX. 19—47.

THE ſecond part of this chapter contains the four following heads. I. The anſwer of *Jeſus Chriſt* to the queſtion, whether it were lawful to pay tribute to the emperor. II. His anſwer to another queſtion of the Sadducees about the reſurrection. III. The queſtion he himſelf put to the Phariſees, concerning the Meſſiah's being called the ſon of *David*. IV. A warning to take care of the Scribes and Phariſees.

REFLECTIONS.

THE deſign of the Phariſees, in aſking our Saviour whether it was lawful to pay tribute to the Emperor, was to lay a ſnare for him. They wanted a pretence to accuſe him either of being an enemy to *Ceſar*, if he ſhould ſay that tribute was not to be paid; or no friend to his own nation, if he ſhould ſay it was. But *Jeſus*, by his profound wiſdom, diſcovered and avoided the ſnare; bidding them *render to Ceſar the things which are Ceſar's, and unto God the things which are God's.*

God's. Let us learn from hence, to ſubmit to the authority of princes, ſtrictly paying that obedience and allegiance which is due to them; and at the ſame time religiouſly diſcharging our duty to God. We may obſerve the ſame wiſdom in his anſwer to the Sadducees, who thought to have puzzled him by their queſtion about the reſurrection. He lets them know, that their queſtion was trifling, ſince after the reſurrection we ſhall be immortal, and like unto angels, and that there will be no marrying in the next life. Then he ſhewed them that the dead muſt riſe, by putting them in mind, that God declares himſelf the God of *Abraham, Iſaac;* and *Jacob,* even after their death; whence it follows, that ſince God is not the God of the dead but of the living, thoſe holy patriarchs, and all thoſe who imitate their faith, ſubſiſt after death, and that they ſhall riſe again. This diſcourſe of our Lord ought fully to convince us that the dead will be raiſed, and ſhould engage us to live pure and godly lives; to the end that, as our Saviour ſays, we may be in the number of thoſe who ſhall be thought worthy to partake of eternal life, and of the reſurrection of the righteous. The queſtion which *Chriſt* put to the Scribes, how the Meſſiah could be both the ſon and lord of *David,* tended to ſhew them, that the dignity of the Meſſiah was much greater than they imagined; and though they thought themſelves the beſt interpreters of the ancient prophecies, their ignorance was very great in this and many other inſtances. Nevertheleſs, he would not explain that queſtion to them more fully, becauſe it would have been uſeleſs, by reaſon of their unteachable temper. Thus does our Lord give up to their own ignorance thoſe who will not be inſtructed. What our Saviour ſays againſt the Scribes and Phariſees, ſhews, that covetouſneſs, pride, and hypocriſy, are moſt odious vices; and that we ought to beware of thoſe in whom they are found, and moſt carefully avoid the ſame vices ourſelves.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXI.

THIS chapter contains four things. I. The judgment which *Chriſt* paſſed upon the poor widow's offering. II. What he ſaid to his diſciples concerning the ſigns which ſhould precede the deſtruction of *Jeruſalem*, and the end of the world. III. He repreſents how terrible this deſtruction would be. IV. He exhorts his diſciples to watch and pray, and live ſoberly, that they might not be ſurpriſed by his coming.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE judgment which *Chriſt* paſſed upon the offering of that widow, who threw two ſmall pieces of money into a box, in which private perſons put what they had a mind to give for the ſervice of the temple, teaches us, that what we devote to pious and charitable uſes is pleaſing to God, when given with a willing mind; and that the offerings of the poor, when made heartily, and according to their power, are as well received as thoſe of the rich. II. We are to conſider, that whatever our Lord had foretold of the ſigns that ſhould precede the deſtruction of *Jeruſalem* and the temple, came to paſs at the time, and in the manner he had foretold. Several falſe teachers appeared, who took upon them the name of the Meſſiah; *Judea* was ruined by war, by famine, and by peſtilence; the diſciples of our Lord were perſecuted by the *Jews*; the *Romans* beſieged and took *Jeruſalem*, and deſtroyed both it and the temple; the inhabitants of the city were reduced to the utmoſt extremity, were put to the ſword, and expoſed to all the dreadful calamities of war. The remains of this people were diſperſed over all the world, and are ſo to this day, and *Jeruſalem* never recovered from its ruins. And all theſe things came to paſs at the time *Chriſt* had foretold, that is, about forty years after his crucifixion. Such clear and expreſs predictions as theſe, which have been, and ſtill are ſo exactly verified by

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the event, will not ſuffer us to doubt that *Chriſt* was ſent from God, and that his doctrine is truly divine. This deſtruction of God's once favourite people, and of a city which he had choſen to place his name in, ought to inſpire us all with fear: and as this deſtruction can be aſcribed to nothing but their ſin in rejecting and crucifying our Lord; this was a proof that he was the Meſſiah. Thereby we may alſo diſcover what Chriſtians are to expect, who reject him by their unbelief and diſobedience. What we read in this chapter ſhould remind us of the end of the world, and the day of judgment; of the horror and deſpair of the wicked, and the joy of the righteous at that day. Laſtly, Our Lord, informs us, that the way to be prepared for his coming, is to live ſoberly, and to watch and pray continually. This is what our Lord exhorts us to in the following expreſſions, which conclude this diſcourſe: *Take heed to yourſelves, leſt at any time your hearts be overcharged with ſurfeiting and drunkenneſs, and cares of this life, and ſo that day come upon you unawares. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to eſcape all theſe things that ſhall come to paſs; and to ſtand before the ſon of man.*

CHAP. XXII. 1—38.

THE Evangeliſt begins here the hiſtory of *Chriſt*'s paſſion; and relates, I. The agreement *Judas* made with the *Jews* to betray our Lord. II. How *Chriſt* celebrated the paſſover, and inſtituted the holy ſacrament. III. His prediction of the treachery of *Judas*. IV. What he ſaid to the Apoſtles, when they diſputed who of them ſhould be greateſt in their maſter's kingdom. V. Our Lord's foretelling St. *Peter*'s fall and repentance, and warning his diſciples of his approaching death.

REFLECTIONS.

THE firſt reflection to be made here, relates to the reſolution *Judas* took of betraying his maſter to the

Jews: And though *Jeſus* gave him to underſtand that he knew his deſign, this perfidious diſciple would not deſiſt from putting it in execution. As it was the love of money which induced him to commit this treacherous action, we ſee plainly that this paſſion, which men are apt to think not very dangerous, blinds men, and hardens their hearts to ſuch a degree, as renders them capable of the worſt of ſins, and proof againſt all arguments to the contrary. II. Our Lord's keeping the paſſover with his diſciples, and inſtituting the bleſſed ſacrament, ſuggeſt theſe two reflections; firſt, that he obſerved to the end of his life all that was preſcribed in the *Jewiſh* law; which ſhould be an argument with us not to neglect or deſpiſe any divine inſtitution: and ſecondly, that we ſhould reverence and reſpect this holy ſacrament which our Saviour then appointed to remain, even to the end of the world, a memorial of this paſſion and death, and ought to partake of this holy ſacrament with true devotion, as often as we approach the Lord's table. III. It is to be obſerved, that our Lord's ſpeaking at his laſt ſupper, of the coming of the kingdom of God, gave occaſion to his diſciples to aſk him which of them ſhould be the greateſt in his kingdom, which they ſuppoſed would be a temporal one. But *Jeſus* exhorted them to correct their carnal notions of his kingdom, and to entertain more humble thoughts; promiſing, however, to exalt them to great glory if they continued faithful unto the end. Theſe leſſons of humility and renunciation of worldly greatneſs, which *Chriſt* gave his apoſtles ſo often, teach us that it is not lawful eagerly to ſeek after honour and glory; but as we are the diſciples of a maſter who was humility itſelf, we ought not to think of being raiſed one above another; and ſhould ever remember, that the true glory to which we ſhould aſpire, is that which *Chriſt* reſerves in the kingdom of God for ſuch as ſhall have been faithful to him, and continued obedient in the midſt of thoſe temptations and trials to which they ſhall have been expoſed. Our Lord foretold that St.

Peter would deny him; but he aſſured him at the ſame time, that he had prayed for him, that his faith ſhould not fail. The ſequel confirmed the truth both of the prediction and promiſe. We are extremely weak; know but little of ourſelves; and our greateſt danger ariſes from preſumption: But that which either ſecures us from falling, or raiſes us up again, is a prudent diſtruſt of ourſelves, and reliance on the grace of God. Let us therefore with great humility and fervency implore his grace, and pray to God that he would vouchſafe to ſecure us againſt our own weakneſs, and ſupport us in ſuch manner that our faith may not fail.

CHAP. XXII. 39—71.

I. *CHRIST'S* agony in the garden. II. He is taken by *Judas*. III. St. *Peter* denies him, and afterwards weeps bitterly for his ſin. IV. *Jeſus* is condemned before the *Jewiſh* council.

REFLECTIONS.

IN the relation St. *Luke* gives of our Lord's ſufferings in the garden, we may obſerve the great ſorrow of his ſoul, his prayers to God, and his reſignation. The anguiſh and trouble he endured, ſhew that he was ſubject to all the infirmities of our nature; the proſpect of his approaching death filled him with ſore amazement; he even needed an angel to ſtrengthen him; but this trouble and anguiſh had nothing in it but what was innocent; and therefore we muſt not imagine his ſufferings were like thoſe of the wicked, or that God was angry with him: his prayers teach us to ſeek our comfort and ſtrength, by addreſſing ourſelves to God under affliction; and his reſignation to the will of his father, ſhould teach us to ſubmit ourſelves in all things, even in the ſoreſt trials, to what God ſhall be pleaſed to do with us. After a ſtate of diſtreſs, like that of our Saviour, we ſhould never be diſcouraged in our afflictions, if, like him, we reſign

ourſelves

ourſelves entirely to the divine will. II. From the manner of our Saviour's being apprehended, we may obſerve, that though he knew the deſign of *Judas*, and could have eſcaped death, yet he delivered himſelf into the hands of the *Jews*; being reſolved to die, that he might fulfil the will of his Father. III. The action of St. *Peter*, who ſmote with a ſword one of the ſervants of the high prieſt, ſhews the concern which that apoſtle had for his Maſter, but it proceeded likewiſe from a raſh and inconſiderate zeal, and a ſpirit of revenge, on which account our Lord blamed him for it. This teaches us, that violence and revenge are diſpleaſing to *Chriſt*, and unworthy of his diſciples; wherefore we ought to ſhun them, and always imitate the great meekneſs and patience of our Saviour, who being able to puniſh thoſe that came to take him, and to defend himſelf againſt their attempts, would not do it, but even gave a proof of his goodneſs as well as of his power, by healing the perſon St. *Peter* had wounded. IV. We find here that St. *Peter*, who after he had expreſſed ſo great a zeal for his Maſter, for fear of death denied him three times. The fall of this apoſtle is a proof of our great weakneſs, and how eaſily we may be ſurpriſed by temptation, when we neglect the duties of watchfulneſs and prayer. However, this apoſtle recovered from his fall, while *Judas* fell into incurable deſpair. Sins which men fall into merely by ſurpriſe, are eaſier repented of than thoſe which are committed obſtinately and deliberately. Laſtly, the relation of *Chriſt*'s appearance before the council of the *Jews*, ſhews, that he was not condemned for any crime, and that he was wholly innocent, ſince the ſentence of his condemnation was only grounded upon what he himſelf had ſaid, that he was the Son of God. However, he owned the ſame, and ſubmitted to ſo unrighteous a judgment; whereby he has given us the moſt convincing proof imaginable of his love, and an example of zeal and patience, which we ought always to ſet before our eyes.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXIII. 1—25.

I. *CHRIST* appears, and is accuſed before *Pilate*, and afterwards before *Herod*, and by both of them is declared innocent. II. *Pilate* endeavours to deliver him: But, being at length overcome by the importunity of the *Jews*, he condemns him to death.

REFLECTIONS.

I. WE obſerve, at firſt ſight, the injuſtice and malice of the *Jews*, who, after they had themſelves condemned our Lord, falſly accuſed him before *Pilate*, of attempting to raiſe a ſedition among the people, and to make himſelf a king; and who, in ſpite of all that *Pilate* could ſay to pacify them, were ſo deſirous of his death, that they choſe rather to ſave the life of a murderer and a rebel, than his. II. We find by this hiſtory, that God permitted *Pilate* to ſend *Jeſus* to king *Herod*, that, by this means, his perfect innocence might more evidently appear, ſince this prince alſo found nothing in him worthy of death. III. It is to be obſerved, that when our Saviour appeared before *Herod*, he did not ſpeak to him, nor return him any anſwer, becauſe the queſtions that prince put to him, did not proceed from any deſign of being better informed by him, but from a vain curioſity, and deſire of ſeeing ſome miracle wrought by him. God manifeſts himſelf to thoſe who with ſincerity ſeek after truth; but leaves thoſe in their blindneſs, who inquire after truth only out of curioſity, and in a ſpirit of profaneneſs. IV. And above all, we ought to obſerve the injuſtice of *Pilate*, who was convinced that *Chriſt* was wrongfully accuſed; deſired to deliver him; and could have done it; but was afraid to do it; and, after ſome reſiſtance, condemned him in complaiſance to the *Jews*. This is the manner of unjuſt judges, and in general, of all thoſe that ſin againſt light, and who pay a greater regard to men, and to motives of policy, intereſt, and ambition, than to what God, juſtice, and

conſcience, require of them. This example likewiſe ſhews, that it is to no purpoſe to have a few good thoughts, and a faint deſire of doing our duty, and even to withſtand temptation for a time, if we give way to it at laſt, but is rather an aggravation of one's fault: and therefore upon all occaſions we are bound to follow the dictates of our conſcience, without ſuffering any ſolicitations, or other reaſons whatever, to withdraw us from our duty.

CHAP. XXIII. 26—56.

ST. *Luke* relates, I. What happened when *Jeſus* was led forth to be crucified, and whilſt he was upon the croſs, and his death. II. The prodigies that then happened. III. His burial.

REFLECTIONS.

THESE are the obſervations which we may make upon the ſeveral circumſtances of our Lord's paſſion. I. We ſee by what he ſaid to the women of *Jeruſalem*, who were weeping for him, that at the very time when they were going ſo unjuſtly to put him to death, he was more ſenſible of the calamities that were coming upon the *Jews*, than of his own ſufferings. This is a moſt pathetic example of meekneſs and patience, and ought to convince us of the perfect love of *Chriſt*, and induce us to pardon thoſe who uſe us unjuſtly, and to be more concerned for others than for ourſelves. II. This prayer, which *Chriſt* made at the time of his crucifixion, *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do*; ought to inſpire us with the like ſentiments. III. Another circumſtance, and which is worthy of our attention, is what St. *Luke* relates about the two thieves that were crucified with our Saviour. In one of them, we ſee a terrible inſtance of obduracy; which ſhews how far men may carry their impiety and wickedneſs: But in the other who reproved his companion, and called upon *Jeſus* as his Saviour and King, though he ſaw him nailed to the croſs, we may remark a

wonder-

wonderful faith, a hearty repentance, and a profound humility. In the promiſe our Lord made him, *This day ſhalt thou be with me in Paradiſe*, we have an inſtance of God's mercy to penitent ſinners, which, however, muſt not be ſo abuſed, as to imagine that we may, without endangering our ſalvation, put off our converſion to the end of our lives. This promiſe does likewiſe aſſure us, that thoſe who die in the favour of God, do enter into a ſtate of happineſs immediately after their death. IV. *Chriſt*'s death and burial are to be conſidered as the laſt degree of his humiliation, and the accompliſhment of that ſacrifice which he offered to God for the atonement of our ſins. Thus we find therein the foundation of our faith and confidence, and powerful motives not to fear death. Laſtly, We are to conſider, that the ſeveral prodigies which happened whilſt our Lord was expiring upon the croſs, were deſigned to ſhew that he was really the Son of God, which effect they actually produced upon the centurion who was appointed to guard the croſs, and all the people that were preſent, particularly thoſe who were his friends and followers in this life. But this is what appeared yet more plainly afterwards, when he aroſe the third day from the dead.

CHAP. XXIV.

I. *CHRIST* being riſen from the dead, angels firſt tell the news to the women that went to his ſepulchre. II. Afterwards he appeared to two of his diſciples as they were going to *Emmaus*. III. And at laſt, to the Apoſtles. IV. St. *Luke* concludes his Goſpel, in relating the laſt orders which our Lord gave his Apoſtles, and his aſcenſion.

REFLECTIONS.

ST. *Luke* informs us in this chapter, that *Chriſt* being riſen, the women that went to his ſepulchre, received the firſt news of his reſurrection from the

angels, and that afterwards he appeared to two Diſciples, and laſtly to all the Apoſtles; who were fully ſatisfied of his reſurrection, by converſing with him, by touching him, and ſeeing them eat in their preſence. Our Lord's appearing at ſeveral times to his Diſciples, proves that he is riſen, and ought powerfully to ſtrengthen our faith and hope, which are built upon his reſurrection. In the diſcourſe which our Saviour had with the two diſciples in the way to *Emmaus*, we may perceive, that though they preſerved a tender remembrance of their Maſter, and had even ſome hopes of his riſing again, they did not yet believe it, and that their faith was as yet very weak; which proves that they did not believe the reſurrection without ſufficient grounds, nor till they were fully convinced of it. On the other hand, we obſerve, that *Chriſt* inſtructed them in the myſtery of his death and reſurrection, by explaining the prophecies relating to them. This ſhould induce us to read and meditate upon the Prophets, ſince we find their predictions ſo proper to confirm us in the faith, eſpecially ſince the event has perfectly cleared up and verified them. In the laſt commands that *Chriſt* left with his diſciples, we find an abſtract of the doctrines of the Goſpel, which may be reduced to this: That *Jeſus Chriſt* died, that he roſe again, and that he ſent his apoſtles to declare throughout the world the remiſſion of ſins, and to perſuade them to repent. Laſtly, The aſcenſion of our Lord ought fully to convince us that he is the Son of God: And as the apoſtles, when they ſaw him aſcend into heaven, worſhipped him, and returned to *Jeruſalem* rejoicing and praiſing God; we ought alſo to worſhip him as our God and Saviour, to obey him, and to rejoice continually, whilſt we reflect on the glory to which he is exalted at the right hand of his Father, and firmly hope to be one day received into his glory ourſelves. *Amen.*

The end of the Goſpel according to St. LUKE.

THE

THE

GOSPEL

ACCORDING TO

ST. JOHN.

ARGUMENT.

The Goſpel according to St. John *was writ a long time after the other Goſpels, about ſixty years, it is thought, after the aſcenſion of* Chriſt. *We meet in this Goſpel with ſeveral of our Lord's diſcourſes, and many remarkable particulars of his life, ſufferings, and reſurrection, which are not related by the other three Evangeliſts.*

CHAP. I.

THIS chapter has three parts. I. St. *John* teaches us, that *Jeſus Chriſt* is God; that he was made man, and came into the world to ſave mankind, and to make all thoſe who believe in him the children of God. II. He relates the teſtimony which *John* the Baptiſt bare of our Saviour, letting the *Jews* know the dignity of his perſon, and the nature of his office. III. *Jeſus* makes himſelf known to *Andrew* and *Peter*, *Philip* and *Nathanael*.

REFLEC-

REFLECTIONS *after reading the chapter.*

THE firſt part of this chapter inſtructs us in the infinite dignity of the perſon of *Jeſus Chriſt*, and the end for which he came into the world. As for his perſon, St. *John* teaches us, that *Jeſus Chriſt*, who is here called the Word, is God; and that this Word was made fleſh, that is to ſay, that *Jeſus* was made man, and aſſumed our nature. Thus, one of the firſt and moſt important truths of Chriſtianity, is to believe that *Jeſus Chriſt* is both God and man. And the divinity of his perſon ſhould convince us of the divinity of his doctrine, and make us acknowledge God's infinite love, in giving his own Son for our redemption. II. We ſee, that the end for which *Chriſt* came into the world, was, to be the light of the world, to enlighten mankind with the knowledge of God, and to purchaſe for them that ſhould receive him, and believe in him, the right of becoming his children. We likewiſe learn, how great the excellence of the Goſpel is, and the obligation we lie under, of receiving with faith and thankſgiving, that wholeſome doctrine preached by the only Son of God; and of ſhewing by our obedience, that we are his children by adoption. III. St. *John* informs us, that *John* the Baptiſt was ſent from God to the *Jews*, to let them know who *Chriſt* was, and prepare them to receive him, not as a temporal, but as a ſpiritual King, and as a Saviour that ſhould atone for the ſins of mankind, and would pour upon them the gifts of God's Holy Spirit. It is for this reaſon, that *John* the Baptiſt ſaid, *Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the ſin of the world.* And, *This is he which baptiſeth with the Holy Ghoſt.* The pardon of ſins, and the power of the Holy Ghoſt, which regenerates and ſanctifies us, are therefore the two principal graces that *Chriſt* has acquired for us, and to which we are bound to aſpire. IV. We ought likewiſe to obſerve the humility, zeal, and faithfulneſs which *John* the Baptiſt exerted, by owning that he was not the Meſſiah, but only his forerunner, and by abaſing himſelf

himſelf ſo much below *Jeſus Chriſt*. Thus we ought likewiſe to entertain humble ſentiments of ourſelves, never ſeek our own glory, but that of *Chriſt* alone; and to labour every one in his calling; and, to the utmoſt of his power, to make him known to men, and to bring them to him. V. We ſee how *Jeſus Chriſt*, as ſoon as ever he entered upon his miniſtry, made choice of his diſciples; he did ſo, becauſe he deſigned to make uſe of them in preaching the Goſpel throughout the world, and to the end they might bear witneſs to his life, his doctrine, his miracles, his death and reſurrection. The great joy of theſe firſt apoſtles, at finding the Meſſiah, and their earneſtneſs to follow him, teaches us, that our greateſt happineſs is to know *Chriſt*, and inviolably to adhere to him. *Chriſt*'s commendation of *Nathanael*, ſaying, *Behold an Iſraelite indeed, in whom is no guile*, ought to be well obſerved. By that we ſee our Lord had a perfect knowledge of all things, and that the quality which he chiefly conſiders, and which he expects in his diſciples, is purity of heart, an upright intention, a great averſion to hypocriſy, and a ſincere love to truth and holineſs.

CHAP. II.

I. *CHRIST* changes water into wine at the marriage in *Cana*. II. He goes to *Jeruſalem*, and drives out of the temple thoſe that profaned it. III. He works ſome miracles in that city at the feaſt of the paſſover.

REFLECTIONS.

THE miracle that *Chriſt* wrought, by changing water into wine at the marriage of *Cana*, has this remarkable circumſtance, that it was his firſt miracle, and that he began by that to manifeſt his divine power and calling, in preſence of the Bleſſed Virgin his mother, of his diſciples, and ſeveral other perſons which cauſed his fame to be ſpread throughout *Galilee*, and his

his diſciples to believe on him. II. For the ſame reaſon, when he came to *Jeruſalem*, he drove out of the temple thoſe who bought and ſold there. He did the ſame three years after, a little before his death, *Chriſt* acting thus in the temple, which he called his father's houſe, was pleaſed to give a proof, at the very beginning of his miniſtry, of his divine authority, and of his great zeal; which was taken notice of by the apoſtles, who applied to him theſe words; *The zeal of thy houſe has eaten me up.* What we are to learn from hence, is, to be filled with great zeal for the glory of God, to oppoſe every thing that is contrary to it, and to ſhew a reſpect for the places that are devoted to the ſervice of God; and, in general, for all that belongs to religion. III. It is to be obſerved, that the *Jews* required of *Chriſt* ſome proofs of his authority; whereupon he told them; *Deſtroy this temple, and I will build it again in three days.* By which he meant, that the ſtrongeſt proof he could give of his receiving his authority from God, was, that he would riſe from the dead the third day; but he ſpoke in figurative and dark terms: it not being proper, as yet, to ſpeak more plainly concerning his death and reſurrection. The laſt thing St. *John* relates here, is, that ſeveral people believed in *Jeſus* when they ſaw the miracles he did. But that *Jeſus did not commit himſelf unto them, becauſe he knew all men:*—And *knew what was in man.* We ought carefully to attend to this place, where it is ſaid, that *Chriſt* knows all men, and all that paſſes in their hearts, and, particularly, that he does not look upon all thoſe who call themſelves Chriſtians to be his true diſciples. Thus we muſt not pretend to be acceptable to him, unleſs the profeſſion we make of believing in him be ſincere, nor unleſs we ſhew the truth of it by our obedience.

CHAP. III.

IN this chapter St. *John* relates, I. The diſcourſe between *Jeſus Chriſt* and *Nicodemus;* in which, under the figure of a ſecond birth, and of water, he ſhews,

ſhews, that men muſt be wholly renewed, and inwardly ſanctified by the Holy Ghoſt, if they would become his diſciples, and enter into the kingdom of heaven. II. Next he makes mention, after a figurative manner, of his death. He informs him of the deſign of his coming into the world, and ſhews what is the cauſe of the unbelief and perdition of men. III. *John* the Baptiſt, informed by his diſciples that a great number of people followed *Chriſt*, expreſſes great joy at it, and declares openly, that *Chriſt* was infinitely more excellent than he; that he was the Son of God, and that none but ſuch as believed in him could be ſaved.

REFLECTIONS.

LET us learn, from the diſcourſe that *Chriſt* had with *Nicodemus*, I. That carnal men cannot enter into the kingdom of God; and that, in order to be admitted there, we muſt become new creatures, and entertain thoughts and inclinations that will lead us to the knowledge of the truth, and to enquire after ſpiritual things. II. This may likewiſe teach us, that ſince it is by the ſpirit of God alone that we can be thus regenerated, we ought to implore fervently and continually the grace of that holy ſpirit, and to make a right uſe of it when God ſhall grant it to us. III. *Chriſt* gives us here an abſtract of the Goſpel, ſaying, That *God ſo loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, to the end, that whoſoever believeth in him may not periſh, but have everlaſting life.* Theſe words, and thoſe which follow, ſhew plainly, that the gift which God has made to mankind of his Son, is the greateſt token he ever gave them of his love; that faith in *Chriſt* is the only means of being ſaved; and if there be any who do not believe, but reject the light of the Goſpel, it only proceeds from their being addicted to ſin, and from a heart depraved and corrupted by their paſſions; but that thoſe who have a love to virtue never fail to approve of the doctrine of *Chriſt*. From whence we ought to conſider of how great importance it is to

diveſt

diveſt ourſelves of our paſſions, and to purify our hearts with a ſincere love of truth and virtue. We have heard the teſtimony of *John* the Baptiſt gave of our Lord, by a public confeſſion that *Jeſus* was greater than he, and how great ſatisfaction he conceived when he was informed, that the glory of our Saviour began to ſpread itſelf. Theſe are arguments of the profound humility and great zeal of that faithful forerunner of the Meſſiah; and thus we ought always to bear witneſs of the truth, and to ſeek not our own glory, but that of our Saviour, in ſuch manner, that the advancement of his kingdom, and the ſalvation of men, may be the principal object of our wiſhes, and beget in us the greateſt joy. We learn further, from this diſcourſe of *John* the Baptiſt, that *Chriſt* being the Son of God, and having received from his Father a power without bounds, it is only by faith, and by a ſincere obedience to his doctrine, that we can obtain ſalvation; and that thoſe who diſobey him, continue expoſed to condemnation and death. This is what is expreſſed in the laſt verſe of this chapter by theſe words, which contain the ſubſtance of the Chriſtian doctrine: *He that believeth on the Son, hath everlaſting life; and he that believeth not the Son, ſhall not ſee life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.*

CHAP. IV.

I. *CHRIST* going from *Judea* to *Galilee*, and paſſing through *Samaria*, diſcourſes with a *Samaritan* woman, and makes himſelf known to her; upon which ſhe believed on him, as ſeveral other *Samaritans* did afterwards. II. Arriving in *Galilee*, he heals the ſon of a nobleman of that country. For the better underſtanding this chapter it muſt be obſerved, that the *Samaritans* were originally partly *Jews* and partly Gentiles; that they worſhipped the true God in a temple built upon mount *Gerizim*, but that they did not ſerve him in the temple of *Jeruſalem*, nor in the manner which he had required; upon which account there was great enmity between them and the *Jews*.

REFLEC-

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE firſt reflection that is to be made here is, that *Chriſt*, meeting with a *Samaritan* woman near a well, in his wiſdom and goodneſs made uſe of that occaſion to inſtruct her, and to bring her to the knowledge of the truth, by ſpeaking to her concerning himſelf and his doctrine, under the ſimilitude of water. The manner in which our Lord mentioned to her this ſpiritual water, and the wholeſome effects which it produces, is a leſſon to us, that the knowledge and grace of *Jeſus Chriſt* is the moſt precious gift that God ever gave to men, and what we ought to deſire with the greateſt fervency. II. The ſecond inſtruction is, that the grace of God, and his covenant, is no longer appropriated to one nation, or to one peculiar place, as was pretended both by the *Jews* and *Samaritans*, but that all men, without diſtinction, may be partakers of it. And, III. That the true worſhip which God requires of us is, not only that which is viſible and external, but that of the heart; and that as he *is a ſpirit, they that worſhip him muſt worſhip him in ſpirit and in truth.* IV. We ſee, that the diſciples of our Lord urging him to take ſome food, received this anſwer from him: *My meat is to do the will of him that ſent me.* And to ſhew them that they ſhould be ready to labour, as he did, in the converſion of ſinners, he uſes the ſimilitude of an approaching harveſt. Let us gather from hence, that there is nothing which we ought to take greater pleaſure and ſatisfaction in, than in doing the will of God, and inſtructing our neighbour; and that all of us ought thus to employ ourſelves with our utmoſt zeal. V. The converſion of the *Samaritan* woman, and ſeveral of the inhabitants of the town of *Sychar*, is an event which ſhews, that the Meſſiah did not come for the ſake of the *Jews* only, but that other nations likewiſe were to be admitted to the benefits of his coming into the world. This converſion, and the eagerneſs of the woman to inform the inhabitants of her town of what had happened,

pened, and to bring them to *Chriſt*, is a leſſon alſo to us, that we ſhould receive with readineſs the Goſpel when it is preached to us; and, moreover, contribute, all that in us lies, to bring over our neighbour to the faith, by our exhortations, and by our good examples. Laſtly, St. *John* informs us, that *Chriſt* being returned into *Galilee*, healed there the ſon of a nobleman of *Capernaum* by his world only, and though the ſick man himſelf was not preſent. Thus our Lord thought fit to give new examples of his power and goodneſs in that country, that he might make himſelf known to the *Jews*, and induce them to believe in him.

CHAP. V.

CHRIST cures a man that had been afflicted with the palſy thirty-eight years. And as the *Jews* found fault with him for working this miracle on the ſabbath-day, he repreſents how unreaſonable they were to condemn him. The ſubſtance of what he ſaid on that occaſion, is as follows: He acquaints the *Jews*, that he wrought his miracles by the power of God; that they ought not to be ſurpriſed at his attributing to himſelf ſo much authority, and calling God his father; that he would do greater miracles; and that he would raiſe the dead; that he would judge the world; that he would beſtow eternal life upon ſuch as believed in him; and condemn all thoſe that ſhould reject him. *Chriſt* adds, that he did not deſire to be believed upon his bare word, that he was ſent by God: that the *Jews* might ſatisfy themſelves by the teſtimony of *John* the Baptiſt, which had great weight with them; by the miracles he wrought, and by the predictions of *Moſes* and the prophets. Laſtly, He complains of the unbelief of the *Jews*, who would not have recourſe to him to obtain everlaſting life; and tells them, that this unbelief proceeded from hearts void of the love of God, and full of ſelf-love, and of the glory of the world.

REFLEC-

REFLECTIONS.

I. WE diſcover, in the cure of the paralytic, whoſe hiſtory St. *John* here gives us, the wonderful power of our Lord, who, by his word only, entirely cured a man that had loſt the uſe of his limbs for thirty-eight years; which was as great a miracle as that which was done at the pool at *Bethesda*. We ſee that the Lord had compaſſion on this paralytical man, aſking him, whether he deſired to be healed, and at the ſame time actually healing him in an unexpected manner. Whence we may obſerve, that our gracious Redeemer is always diſpoſed to communicate his favours to men, and to deliver them from their miſeries; that he even prevents them, and offers his mercies to them; but that nobody is admitted to partake of them, but thoſe who deſire them, and who, like the paralytical man, lay hold of thoſe offers which *Chriſt* ſo graciouſly makes them. II. We ſhould carefully attend to that which *Chriſt* ſaid to the ſick man: *Behold, thou art made whole, ſin no more, leſt a worſt thing come unto thee.* This is a warning to thoſe whom God has delivered from any infirmity, or any other misfortune, to avoid, for the time to come, falling into ſin, for fear of obliging God to puniſh them more ſeverely. The diſcourſe in which *Chriſt* proves to the *Jews*, by ſeveral arguments, that he was ſent from God, ſhews us, that our faith is built upon a ſolid foundation, upon convincing and inconteſtible proofs; to fortify ourſelves therefore in the faith, we ought ſeriouſly to weigh the proofs contained in this chapter, and add to them thoſe which the *Jews* had not at that time, and which are drawn from the reſurrection of our Saviour; from the eſtabliſhment of the Chriſtian Religion; and from the teſtimony of the apoſtles. Beſides this general obſervation, we may make the three following particular ones upon this diſcourſe of *Chriſt*. I. That God gave our Lord an unlimitted power, which, as he exerted formerly in doing miracles, he will diſplay yet more pompouſly when he ſhall come to raiſe the dead,

and

and to judge all men, both the righteous and the wicked. We ought therefore to revere this power of the Son of God, to obey him, and to honour him, as we honour the Father, that we may be raiſed one day to life eternal, and not to condemnation. II. Since *Chriſt* alledges the teſtimony of the holy Scriptures, and of *Moſes* in particular, and exhorts the *Jews* to ſearch and examine them, it follows, that we ought often to read, and carefully to meditate upon the writings of the Old Teſtament, as well as thoſe of the New, ſince this is the way to be confirmed in the faith, and to obtain everlaſting life. III. What *Chriſt* ſaid to the *Jews* about their unbelief, and the cauſe of it, is a leſſon to us, that if there be any people that will not come to our Lord to obtain life, the reaſon is, that they have not the love of God in them, and that they are ſlaves to their paſſions. Above all, *Chriſt* declares that the love of the world, and the glory of it, and the deſire to be approved and well eſteemed of by men, is one of the greateſt impediments to faith and ſalvation.

CHAP. VI. 1—21.

I. *CHRIST* feeds five thouſand perſons with five loaves and two fiſhes. II. He walks upon the water to go to his diſciples, and ſtills a tempeſt.

REFLECTIONS.

THE feeding five thouſand men with five loaves and two fiſhes, was a miracle which the apoſtles did not expect, though they had been witneſſes of ſo many other miracles. This miracle our Lord wrought as much as to increaſe and ſtrengthen their faith, and convince them of his almighty power, as to ſupply the neceſſities of the multitude that followed him. This, therefore, is one of the moſt illuſtrious miracles our Lord wrought, by reaſon of the great numbers that were witneſſes of it. St. *John* obſerves, that thoſe people were ſo affected with this miracle, that they

not only affirmed that *Chriſt* was the prophet, and the Meſſiah whom the *Jews* expected, but they would likewiſe have declared him king; for which reaſon he withdrew to a ſolitary place, being unwilling that any ſedition or commotion ſhould be raiſed for his ſake. This proceeding of the *Jews*, was an effect of the opinion they had taken up, that the Meſſiah was to be a temporal king; but the retreat of *Chriſt* ſhewed that his kingdom was not an earthly one; which ſhould teach us, not to ſeek our glory in this world; and, above all, to ſhun the pomp and ſplendor of the world, and to behave ourſelves always with great humility. III. In the other miracle that our Saviour wrought in behalf of his apoſtles, and which muſt needs have made a deep impreſſion on them, when he came to them walking upon the water, he gave a moſt convincing proof of his care and love for his diſciples; ſuffering them to be expoſed to a ſtorm, that he might prove them, and afterwards deliver them in a manner more ſurpriſing, and fuller of comfort, than if he had been with them at firſt. Such is the iſſue of the trials and afflictions with which God viſits thoſe he loves; ſooner or later he comes to their aſſiſtance; and the evils they are expoſed to manifeſt his love to them, and increaſe their conſolation and their joy.

CHAP. VI. 22—71.

I. OUR Lord and Saviour having miraculouſly fed the people with five loaves and two fiſhes, and obſerving their eagerneſs in following him, takes occaſion from thence to exhort them to ſeek for ſpiritual food, and ſuch as would make them live for ever, rather than for bodily ſuſtenance. II. He then tells them, that he was that food, the true bread from heaven, and that thoſe who eat of that bread ſhall attain everlaſting life. III. He adds, by way of explanation of what he had before ſaid, that this food was his fleſh and his blood, which he would give for the life of the world: by which he hinted at the benefits of his own death;

death; but he expreſſed himſelf figuratively, and ſomewhat obſcurely, becauſe he would not yet openly declare that he ſhould be put to death. IV. Some of his diſciples being offended at this diſcourſe, *Chriſt* tells them, that theſe words were to be underſtood in a ſpiritual ſenſe; but that did not hinder ſeveral among them from forſaking him.

REFLECTIONS.

THE firſt and chief inſtruction this diſcourſe of our Saviour furniſhes us with, is to labour much more earneſtly to procure that food that cauſes men to live for ever, than that which only ſerves to ſupport a temporal and fading life. Our Lord has told us plainly, that he himſelf is this heavenly bread, and that this food of the ſoul is only to be found in him, and in his Goſpel; and that the will of his father who had ſent him was, that all that believe in him ſhould have eternal life, and that he ſhould raiſe them up at the laſt day. What our Lord ſaid upon this occaſion was obſcure to thoſe that heard him. The *Jews* could not conceive how *Chriſt* was that bread that deſcended from heaven; and how it was neceſſary to eat his fleſh, and drink his blood, in order to obtain everlaſting life; but to us Chriſtians this ought to be very clear, foraſmuch as we know that the death of *Jeſus Chriſt* is the true food of the ſoul, and the only principle of ſpiritual life and immortality. He tells us himſelf, that his words are ſpirit and life; that is to ſay, they are to be underſtood after a ſpiritual manner; and, that to eat the fleſh of *Chriſt*, and drink his blood, means nothing elſe, but to come to him, and to believe in him. Only it is neceſſary that this faith ſhould be ſincere, and attended with love, truſt, and obedience, and that it ſhould unite us ſo cloſely to *Chriſt*, that nothing ſhould be able to ſeparate us from him. The queſtion which our Lord put to his apoſtles, whether they would likewiſe forſake him, as ſeveral of his diſciples had done; and St. *Peter*'s reply, *Lord, to whom ſhould we go?*

oblige us to conſider, that *Chriſt* forces none into his ſervice; that the obedience he requires, is free and voluntary; that, however, we ought never to leave him, ſince he only has the words of eternal life; and that, being the Son of the living God, he is the ſole author of ſalvation. The laſt words of this chapter, where it is ſaid, that *Jeſus* knew from the beginning that *Judas*, who was of the number of the twelve apoſtles, would betray him; teach us, that the Lord knows all thoſe that call themſelves his diſciples, and that he diſcerns thoſe who do not believe in him, from ſuch as are faithful to him. An external profeſſion of Chriſtianity is not ſufficient, and there is nothing but a true faith and ſteady obedience, that can aſſure our heart before God, and make us accepted by him, who ſees the hearts of all men, and who will render to them all according to their works.

CHAP. VII. 1—30.

I. ST. *John* relates here a journey that *Chriſt* made to *Jeruſalem* at the feaſt of tabernacles. II. The different judgments that men paſſed upon him. And, III. His anſwer to the *Jews*, who found fault with him for his having cured a paralytical perſon ſome months before, at the feaſt of the paſſover, upon a ſabbath-day.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE firſt thing to be obſerved in this chapter, is, that our Lord refuſed to go publicly to *Jeruſalem*, and in the company of his relations: he acted thus out of prudence, that he might avoid all pomp, and that he might not be expoſed to the rage of the *Jews*, who ſought to put him to death. That which he ſaid to ſome of his relations, that *the world*, that is to ſay, the *unbelieving Jews, could not hate them, but hated him, becauſe he teſtified of it, that the works thereof were evil;* contains a certain truth, namely, that worldly people love thoſe that are like them, but hate

thoſe whoſe lives and diſcourſes condemn their wicked actions. II. We ſee here the various judgments the people paſſed upon *Chriſt*; but, above all, we may obſerve the blindneſs and malice of the *Jews*, who, without minding the proofs which our Lord, by his miracles, gave of his divine miſſion, and without being moved with his mild, and, at the ſame time, ſtrong arguments, in vindication of what he had done, and to prove that his doctrine was from heaven, accuſed him of breaking the law of God, and of being poſſeſſed of a devil; and would even have put him to death. This procedure of the *Jews*, who thus reſiſted and hardened themſelves againſt the truth, ſhews, that prejudice and paſſion may blind men to ſuch a degree, that nothing can undeceive them; and that they are even offended at thoſe things which tend moſt to their edification and confirmation. What our Saviour ſays on this occaſion, deſerves our particular attention: *If any man will do the will of my Father, he ſhall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I ſpeak of myſelf.* Let us gather from hence, this important leſſon, that the principal diſpoſition we ought to be in, in order to know the doctrine of *Jeſus Chriſt*, and to diſcover the truth and beauty of it, is to have an upright heart, and a ſincere deſire to do the will of God, as far as it is and can be known to us; but thoſe who are not thus diſpoſed, can never come to the knowledge of the truth. Laſtly, It likewiſe appears from this hiſtory, that though the *Jews* had formed a deſign of putting *Jeſus* to death, they could do him no harm, nor durſt any man lay hands on him. The wicked can hurt good men, only when, and as God is pleaſed to permit; and, whatever men may enterprize, the counſel of the Lord that ſhall ſtand.

CHAP. VII. 31—53.

THE Phariſees being enraged becauſe the people were affected at the diſcourſes and miracles of our Lord, ſent ſome perſons to ſeize on him; but he continued

tinued to ſpeak with ſo much authority and evidence, and exhorted the people ſo pathetically, that ſeveral acknowledged him to be a prophet; and that ſome even believed he was the Meſſiah; ſo that thoſe who were ordered to lay hold of him, returned without daring to do it; at which the Phariſees were extremely irritated.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE firſt thing we have here to obſerve, is, that the diſcourſes and miracles of *Chriſt* produced very different effects, foraſmuch as the people were extremely affected with them, and filled with admiration; whereas, on the contrary, the Phariſees were ſo provoked by them, that they would have cauſed our Lord to be apprehended. Thus we may ſee how differently the word of God is received; ſome open their eyes and their hearts to the truth, and grow better by it; others reject it, and proceed even to hate thoſe who propoſe it, and to be exaſperated againſt them. II. We may take notice, in the diſcourſes of our Saviour, with what evidence, meekneſs, and authority, he continues to apply himſelf to the *Jews;* and, eſpecially, admire thoſe kind invitations which he makes them, ſaying, *If any one thirſt, let him come unto me and drink.* Whereby he offers them his grace, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit, which he was ready to pour upon them that ſhould believe in him. He likewiſe makes us the ſame offers in the Goſpel. It is our buſineſs to receive them as we ought, and to embrace them with zeal and gratitude. III. We ought to reflect upon what St. *John* ſays, that thoſe who were commanded to ſeize our Saviour, durſt not do it, but told them who ſent them, that *never man ſpake like this man.* By which we ſee, on one hand, the virtue and efficacy of the word of God; and, on the other, that God renders the deſigns of the wicked, vain and uſeleſs whenever he pleaſes. Finally, it is very remarkable, that the Phariſees, inſtead of diſcovering that in oppoſing *Chriſt*, they oppoſed God himſelf;

and inſtead of being moved at ſeeing ſo many people bearing witneſs to our Lord, were more and more enraged againſt him, and even againſt the people who ſpoke favourably of him and his doctrine. This is a proof, that the moſt learned, and moſt diſtinguiſhed in the eye of the world, are often leſs diſpoſed than the mean and ſimple to receive the Goſpel; becauſe they are ſlaves to their paſſions, and, eſpecially, becauſe they are filled with pride, and a good opinion of themſelves, and do not endeavour ſincerely, and in the integrity of their hearts, to be inſtructed, and to know the truth.

CHAP. VIII. 1—29.

ST. *John* relates here, I. The hiſtory of the woman taken in adultery. II. A diſcourſe that *Chriſt* had with the *Jews*, in which he told them he was the light of the world, and that they ought to believe what he told them of himſelf. III. He reproaches them for their blindneſs and unbelief, and ſpeaks about his departure out of this world, and his death; but does it in figurative terms, and ſuch as they could not comprehend.

REFLECTIONS.

TO underſtand the hiſtory of the adulterous woman, and to make a right uſe of it, we muſt obſerve, I. That the deſign of the Phariſees in bringing this woman to *Chriſt*, was to enſnare him; for, if he had ſaid that ſhe ought not to be put to death, they would have charged him with breaking the law of God; and, if he had paſſed ſentence of condemnation on her, they would have accuſed him to the governor, for violating the rights of the ſupreme magiſtrate. II. If *Chriſt* did not condemn that woman, it was not becauſe her crime was not great, and worthy of death, but for prudential reaſons, and to ſhew that he ſought nothing but the ſalvation of ſinners. III. It is particularly to be obſerved, that our Lord ſaid to that woman, *Go thy way, and ſin no more*; which ſhews,

ſhews, that he gave, on this occaſion, a proof of his mercy towards ſinners, but that he was far from excuſing her crime; which may alſo teach us, that God does not pardon ſinners, but upon condition that they will not relapſe into their ſins. In our Saviour's diſcourſe with the *Jews*, we may conſider, I. Theſe remarkable expreſſions of our Lord: *I am the light of the world; he that followeth me ſhall not walk in darkneſs, but ſhall have the light of life.* Theſe words ought to be continually meditated upon by Chriſtians, and ſhould ſtrongly engage them to make a right uſe of that light which lighteth them, ever following *Chriſt*, and walking in the way which he has marked out for us by his doctrine, and by his example, and which will certainly lead us to life and immortality. II. As the Phariſees reproached our Lord with ſpeaking too highly of himſelf, he ſaid ſeveral things to cure them of their prejudices againſt him, and to engage them to believe that he ſpake to them from God. What the Saviour of the world ſaid upon that occaſion, ſhould have greater weight with us, in convincing us that he is the Son of God, and that his doctrine proceeds from heaven; God having given authentic teſtimony thereof, not only by the miracles which our Saviour wrought, but likewiſe by what followed his death, his reſurrection, and his exaltation to heavenly glory. Laſtly, We have ſeen that the Phariſees did not improve by the inſtructions of our Lord; though he ſpake to them with ſo much meekneſs, and what he ſaid was attended with ſo much evidence, yet that they continued ſtill in their unbelief, and that *Chriſt* therefore told them, that they ſhould die in their ſins. Thus men, who are enſlaved to the world, and to their paſſions, reſiſt the evidence and force of truth when it is propoſed to them; and, by refuſing to believe in *Jeſus*, and to obey him, they remain in their ſins, and conſequently in condemnation and in death.

CHAP. VIII. 30—59.

I. *CHRIST* exhorts thoſe among the *Jews*, who had believed in him, to perſevere in his doctrine, and promiſes them true liberty. II. He tells the unbelieving *Jews*, who gloried in being free, and the children of *Abraham*, that they were not his children, ſince they did not imitate him in his faith; and reproaches them for their unbelief; at which they were ſo provoked, as to ſay very harſh things to him, and to attempt to ſtone him; but he eſcaped their rage, and retreated from them.

REFLECTIONS.

IN this diſcourſe our Saviour teaches us, I. That when we have the happineſs of knowing him, and believing in him, we ought conſtantly to perſevere in the truth, and adhere to it more and more; which, if we do, we ſhall be really his diſciples, and enjoy that true liberty of the children of God, which conſiſts, as our Lord has ſaid, in being delivered from the bondage of ſin. II. What he told the *Jews*, that they were not the children of God, nor of *Abraham*, ſince they did not imitate the faith of the patriarch, but that they were rather the children of the devil, ſince they did his works, has great weight in it. We may learn from thence, that the ſureſt token whereby to diſcover the children of God, is, that they do his will, and that they love thoſe whom God loves; but thoſe that ſet themſelves againſt the truth, and againſt ſuch as declare it, are the children and imitators of the devil, who is a liar, a murderer, and an enemy of the truth. III. We likewiſe ſee in this diſcourſe of our Lord, how happy thoſe are who receive his doctrine, and ſubmit thereto, ſince he declares that they are not under the power of death. IV. We may obſerve next, that though *Chriſt* ſpoke to the *Jews* with ſo much plainneſs and ſtrength of argument, they, inſtead of benefiting by his inſtructions, were

exaſperated by them, and proceeded to ſuch a degree of rage, as to call him a *Samaritan*, and a man poſſeſſed by the devil. This is an inſtance of the moſt deplorable blindneſs, and the blackeſt malice, and ſhews us how dangerous it is to abandon ourſelves to our paſſions, and to fall into unbelief. Laſtly, We have in this chapter a remarkable proof of the glory and divinity of *Chriſt*, by his declaring that he was before *Abraham*. The infinite dignity of his perſon ought to convince us ſo much the more of the divinity of the Goſpel, and our obligation to obey him, as he is our God and our Saviour.

CHAP. IX.

THIS chapter contains the hiſtory of a man that was born blind, who received his ſight.

REFLECTIONS.

THE hiſtory contained in this chapter is very remarkable: beſides the goodneſs and power of *Chriſt*, which evidently appear in his giving ſight to the man that was born blind, as well as in all his other miracles, we ſee here three things well worthy our attention. I. The proceeding of the Phariſees, and the pains they took to deny this miracle: What they ſaid for that purpoſe to the father and mother of the blind man, and afterwards to the blind man himſelf, to know whether he had been blind, and how he received his ſight. The Phariſees, by all this enquiry, did not deſire to find out the truth, but rather to ſtifle and oppoſe it: and, when they could not avoid ſeeing it, they rejected it, and ſlandered *Jeſus*, the author of it; and at laſt, when they could ſay nothing againſt the certainty of the miracle, and were unable to anſwer the arguments of the man, they broke out into injurious language againſt him, and excommunicated him. In all this their procedure we may diſcover marks of the moſt violent paſſion, and of the moſt obſtinate malice. Thus do the wicked ſhut their eyes againſt

againſt the truth, and are more and more hardened, even by thoſe things which ſhould affect and convert them; however, all the endeavours of the Phariſees to diſcredit the miracle, tended very remarkably to make it known, and prove the certainty of it. II. We may obſerve, in the diſcourſe of the blind man, the ingenuity with which he ſpoke to the Phariſees, and confounded them, maintaining that he had been well cured; and ſince *Chriſt* had reſtored his ſight to him, he could not be a wicked man and a deceiver, as they pretended. In reading this relation, we ſee the power of truth, and that the moſt ſimple perſons do often judge better of things, than thoſe who are thought to have more ſenſe and knowledge; and, that God makes uſe of ſuch people, to confound the wiſe men of this world. III. We ſee that *Chriſt*, knowing that this man had been excommunicated by the Phariſees for ſpeaking the truth in their preſence, made himſelf known to him, telling him, that he was the Son of God, and aſſuring him, that thoſe who paſſed for the moſt learned, ſuch as the Phariſees, ſhould continue in their blindneſs, whilſt ſuch as were looked upon as ignorant, but who were humble and ſincere, ſhould benefit by his doctrine. Our Lord, we ſee, graciouſly receives thoſe who love the truth, and that are perſecuted by the world, and grants them new gifts and new graces; whilſt thoſe who are conceited of themſelves, and obſtinately reject the truth when it is offered to them, remain in their unbelief, and periſh in their blindneſs.

CHAP. X.

WHAT is here related happened at two different times: the firſt part of the chapter contains a diſcourſe which our Lord had with the *Jews*, after he had cured the man that was born blind, in which he compares himſelf to a good ſhepherd. He ſpeaks likewiſe of falſe ſhepherds, and of hirelings, by which characters he deſcribes deceivers, and particularly the Phariſees.

Phariſees. He ſays, that ſuch people had nothing elſe in view but their own intereſt, and only ſought to gratify their own pride and covetouſneſs; whereas, he came into the world to procure the good and welfare of his ſheep, and that he was even willing to lay down his life for them. Some months after, *Jeſus* being at *Jeruſalem*, at the feaſt of the dedication of the temple, and the *Jews* enquiring of him, whether he were the Meſſiah, he tells them, that his miracles ſhewed ſufficiently who he was; that if they did not know him it proceeded from the hardneſs of their hearts, but that his own ſheep knew him; that he would give unto them everlaſting life; and that God would never ſuffer them to periſh, ſince he and his Father were one. The *Jews*, upon this, were going to ſtone him, becauſe he took upon him the title of the Son of God; but our Lord, not being willing to ſpeak openly to them concerning his divinity, contented himſelf with telling them, that ſince the Scripture calls princes and magiſtrates Gods, he might very well aſſume the name of the Son of God without blaſphemy, foraſmuch as God had ſent him into the world, and that his miracles plainly proved that he was ſo. After which our Saviour retired from *Jeruſalem*.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS diſcourſe of *Chriſt*, ſpeaking of himſelf under the character of a ſhepherd, is much plainer to us than it was to the *Jews*, ſince we know perfectly that our Lord is the true ſhepherd, who gave his life for the ſheep, that is to ſay, for all true believers; and that he came to gather them all together, from *Jews* and *Gentiles* into his church. Upon which we muſt acknowledge the infinite love of *Chriſt*, our good ſhepherd, who ſo tenderly loved his ſheep, and who ſuffered death, to obtain life and ſalvation for them; and how great our happineſs is, to be of the number of thoſe ſheep which he has redeemed by his blood, and for which he has purchaſed everlaſting life. The

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ſecond part of this chapter ſuggeſts to us four conſiderations. I. The firſt relates to the ſtrange blindneſs and malice of the *Jews*, who after ſo many miracles which *Chriſt* had wrought, and ſo many proofs that ſhewed he was ſent from God, aſked him whether he was the Meſſiah, and then would have ſtoned him for a blaſphemer. Our Lord himſelf obſerves, that this unbelief of the *Jews* proceeded from their not loving the truth, and from their want of a ſincere deſire to know it. If therefore men do not profit by the doctrine of *Chriſt Jeſus*, and in the midſt of light are ſtill in ignorance and error, it proceeds from the want of docility, and love of truth and virtue. II. The ſecond obſervation is, that the token and character of our Saviour's ſheep, that is to ſay, of his true diſciples, is to hearken to the voice of their divine Shepherd, to follow him, and to obey him. III. We ſee in this diſcourſe of our Lord, that the happineſs and ſalvation of true believers is certain, ſince he declares, *That he knows them, that he gives unto them eternal life, that they ſhall never periſh, neither ſhall any pluck them out of his hands.* Theſe words ſhould fill all thoſe that love the Lord *Jeſus* with great comfort, and a firm expectation of that glory and felicity which is prepared for them in his kingdom. IV. Since our Lord ſays, at the end of this chapter, that he could juſtly take upon himſelf the title of the Son of God, this ſhould fully convince us of his divinity, and the excellence of his office, eſpecially as we are elſewhere aſſured that he is both God and man; which is the ſtrongeſt motive to believe in him, and to pay him that obedience which is ſo juſtly due to him, on account of that authority he has over us, and his love towards us.

CHAP. XI.

THIS chapter contains the hiſtory of the reſurrection of *Lazarus*.

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REFLECTIONS.

THE following are the principal reflections to be made upon this hiſtory, which is one of the moſt remarkable of the whole Goſpel: I. That though our Lord had a great kindneſs for *Lazarus*, yet he did not go to *Bethany* till after he was dead, to the end, that the miracle of reſtoring him to life, might be much more illuſtrious than that of curing his diſtemper. Thoſe whom God loves may be expoſed to many evils; he even delays to come to their aſſiſtance; but he uſes them thus, that his power and love may appear more plainly in their deliverance. II. We may obſerve, in what the ſiſters of *Lazarus* ſaid to our Saviour, their piety, love, and adherence to *Chriſt*, and the great opinion they had of his power. We ſee, in particular that they were fully perſuaded their brother would riſe at the laſt day. We have yet much greater reaſon than thoſe two holy women to love our Lord, to put our whole truſt in him, to expect all things from his power, and, particularly, to believe that the dead ſhall riſe again at the end of the world. III. The kindneſs with which *Chriſt* ſpake to the ſiſters of *Lazarus*, to comfort them, and to prepare them for the miracle which he deſigned to do: the concern he ſhewed, and the tears he ſhed when he ſaw *Lazarus* in the tomb, are very plain proofs, how much he loved theſe two women and their brother, and how charitable he was, and full of compaſſion. As far as we are affected with the misfortunes of other men, and ready to comfort the miſerable, we may be ſaid to have the ſpirit of *Chriſt*. But what is chiefly to be obſerved here, is, that our Lord reſtored life to *Lazarus*, after he had been four days in the grave. This great miracle, which *Chriſt* wrought but a few days before his death, and in the preſence of a great number of the *Jews*, ſeveral of whom believed in him, is one of the moſt illuſtrious proofs that he gave, during his whole life, that he was the Son of God. This miracle ſerves eſpecially to confirm the doctrine of the reſurrection

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of the dead, and the truth of what our Lord ſays in this chapter: *I am the reſurrection and the life; He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet ſhall he live.* IV. St. *John* acquaints us, that the Phariſees, inſtead of being convinced by ſo illuſtrious a miracle, were ſo enraged to ſee the people declare for *Chriſt*, that they formed a deſign of putting him to death, which made him retire to a ſolitary place till the feaſt of the paſſover. Thus the enemies of our Lord grew more and more obſtinate, reſiſted to the very laſt the evidence of his miracles; and every thing our merciful Redeemer did to ſoften and prevail upon them, only ſerved to provoke them more againſt him. God permitted, however, the *Jews* to take the reſolution of putting him to death, to the end that, contrary to their deſign, our Lord might die, not only for the *Jewiſh* nation, but alſo to collect into one body all the children of God, and by that means eſtabliſh his doctrine and kingdom in the world,

CHAP. XII. 1—19.

I. *MARY* anoints our Saviour's feet. II. Several people come to *Bethany* to ſee *Chriſt*, and *Lazarus* that was raiſed. III. Our Lord makes his royal entry into *Jeruſalem*.

REFLECTIONS.

THERE are three things to be conſidered in the anointing of our Saviour's feet; the action itſelf; what judgment *Judas* paſſed upon this action; and what was ſaid by our Lord in defence of it. As *Mary* anointed him with precious ointment, after the manner of thoſe times, to teſtify her reſpect and love for him, we ought likewiſe to ſhew him our love and our zeal by all the means that are in our power, and which are moſt pleaſing in his ſight. The murmuring of *Judas*, who, being a thief, and a covetous man, complained that the price of that ointment was not given to the poor, proves very clearly, that the heart of this falſe diſciple

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was entirely corrupted. We likewiſe ſee by this inſtance, what power covetouſneſs has over thoſe whom it poſſeſſes, and how wicked men do ſometimes hide their paſſions under the veil of religion and piety. And what *Chriſt* ſaid in behalf of *Mary*, ſhews, that he vouchſafes to accept whatever is done for his honour, and particularly all acts of charity. II. The reſort of many people to *Bethany* to ſee *Lazarus*, whom our Lord had raiſed, and the reſolution taken by the prieſts to put *Lazarus* to death as well as *Chriſt*, is an argument of the truth of this miracle. It likewiſe ſhews, that the wickedneſs of the chief among the *Jews* was at the higheſt pitch, and that there was no more good to be expected from them. And, III. The acclamations of the people who attended him when he made entry into *Jeruſalem*, is another proof of the reſurrection of *Lazarus*; ſince St. *John* takes notice that the multitude bore witneſs that *Chriſt* had called *Lazarus* from the grave, and reſtored him to life. Our Lord was pleaſed, at that time, to receive the homage which he had before refuſed, and ſuffered himſelf to be publickly acknowledged for the Meſſiah. He appeared, however, on this occaſion, in great ſimplicity, his attendants being none but the common people, and he himſelf ſitting on an aſs, as the prophet *Zechariah* had foretold. All this was done, that none of the marks which the prophets had given of the Meſſiah might be wanting in him; and to ſhew that humility and meekneſs were his character; and that the kingdom he was going to eſtabliſh was a ſpiritual and heavenly kingdom. Now, if the diſciples of *Jeſus Chriſt*, and the multitude, expreſſed their joy and gratitude by attending him into *Jeruſalem*, we are ſtill more engaged to adore our great Redeemer, and bleſs God continually for the wonders he has done, and the many proofs he has given us of his power and his love.

CHAP.

CHAP. XII. 20—50.

ST. *John* relates four things: I. What *Chriſt* ſaid when certain ſtrangers, that were come to *Jeruſalem* to keep the feaſt of the paſſover, deſired to ſee him. II. That God cauſed a voice at that time to be heard from heaven; and that upon the ſame occaſion our Lord diſcourſed concerning his death, and the eſtabliſhment of his kingdom, but that the *Jews* did not underſtand his words. III. St. *John* obſerves, that though our Lord had wrought ſo many miracles, the *Jews* did not believe in him, and that this their unbelief had been foretold by the prophet *Iſaiah*. IV. And laſtly, the Evangeliſt relates ſome exhortations which *Chriſt* made to the *Jews* before his death; in which he ſhews what would happen to thoſe which would receive his doctrine, and to thoſe that ſhould reject it.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE meaning of what our Saviour ſaid, when the ſtrangers deſired to ſee him, was, that he would quickly manifeſt himſelf to all men; but, that he was to die firſt, as wheat muſt be put into the ground and die, before it can bring forth fruit. Our Lord adds, that it ſhould be with his diſciples as with himſelf; that all thoſe who had a mind to follow him ought to prepare themſelves for ſufferings and death; but, that he would exalt thoſe that ſhould believe in him and ſerve him, to the ſame glory to which he was going to be exalted. The *Jews* did not comprehend this diſcourſe; but it is by no means obſcure to us. II. At that time *Jeſus*, under the terrors of his approaching death, prayed unto his Father, that he would manifeſt his glory in a wonderful manner, and ſhew that he was his Son. Upon which God cauſed a voice to be heard from heaven, declaring that what he had prayed for ſhould be accompliſhed. This voice from heaven was heard when our Saviour was going to be crucified, to take

take away the ſcandal of the croſs, and to convince them that he was really the Son of God. Whereupon our Lord declared, that the kingdom of Satan was going to be deſtroyed, and he ſhould ſoon draw all men to him, and that this would be one of the effects of his death. The event ſoon verified the divinity of this prediction. III. St. *John* reflecting, in this chapter, upon the unbelief of the *Jews*, obſerves, that the greateſt part did not believe in *Chriſt*, and others durſt not own that they took him for the Meſſiah, becauſe they were afraid of the Phariſees, and becauſe they loved the praiſe of men more than that of God. Thus it is when the Goſpel is preached to men; ſome harden themſelves, and reject it; and others, who are in ſome manner affected with its excellency, dare not make an open profeſſion of truth and holineſs, being with-holden by fear, by an unſeaſonable ſhame, or by other paſſions. IV. We ought carefully to attend to what *Chriſt* ſaid to the *Jews* towards the end of his life, when they were going to be deprived of his preſence; namely, that he was come to enlighten them, and to lead them to life; that they ſhould have walked in the light, before the darkneſs overtook them; and, that thoſe who would not hear his word, ſhould be judged by that ſame word which they rejected. This declaration is made to all who have the Goſpel made known to them, and warns us to make a better uſe than the *Jews* did of this divine light, which enlightens us, leſt the darkneſs overtake us too; and leſt the Goſpel, which is preached to us, become one day the cauſe of our condemnation.

CHAP. XIII.

I. *CHRIST* waſhes his apoſtles feet, and exhorts them to humility and charity. II. He declares that *Judas* would deliver him to the *Jews*, and diſcourſes with his diſciples about his deceaſe. III. He exhorts them to love one another. IV. He foretels that *Peter* would deny him.

REFLEC-

REFLECTIONS.

WHEN the Son of God waſhed the feet of his apoſtles, a little before his death, the deſign of that action, ſo extraordinary and ſo ſurprizing, was to ſhew how much he loved them, to give them an example of humility, and to teach them, that they ought to love one another, to conſider all men as their equals, and to baniſh from their minds all thoughts of a temporal kingdom and worldly glory. We ought ſeriouſly to meditate upon this inſtance of humility and charity, which is of ſo great efficacy to render us truly humble, and to excite us to love one another ſincerely. If *Jeſus Chriſt*, who is our Maſter and Lord, has ſo humbled himſelf as to waſh his diſciples feet, which was the buſineſs of ſervants and ſlaves, there is no office we ought to think too mean, when charity, and the good of our neighbour, is concerned. This is the uſe we ought to make of this action, as our Lord exhorts us in theſe words: *I have given you an example, that ye ſhould do as I have done to you; if ye know theſe things, happy are ye if ye do them.* II. Our Lord thought fit to declare in the preſence of his apoſtles, that one of them would deliver him to the *Jews*, that when *Judas* ſhould betray him, they might be convinced that it was to happen ſo, for the accompliſhment of the deſigns of Providence. Howbeit, *Chriſt* did not name *Judas*, nor diſcover him to all the apoſtles, becauſe they ſhould not attempt to hinder the execution of his deſign. From thence it appears plainly, that our Saviour was not ignorant of any thing that was to befal him; that he knew the purpoſes of men, and the moſt ſecret thoughts of their hearts. He foreſees the treachery of *Judas*, but is not the author of it; it was the covetouſneſs of that infidel diſciple, which hurried him on to ſo foul a deed; and he proceeds to put in execution what he had reſolved, though *Jeſus* had forewarned him that he knew his deſign. Thus God foreſees the ſins which men are going to commit, without being the cauſe of them, he warns them of their

their ſin and danger, but when they are obſtinate, he leaves them to themſelves. III. It is next to be obſerved that *Chriſt* being ſhortly to leave his diſciples, recommends to them, above all things, to love one another, which is the great commandment that our Bleſſed Redeemer has left, and of which he has given us an example, by dying for us; and has moſt expreſly declared, that this ſhould be the token by which his true diſciples would be diſtinguiſhed. Our principal duty therefore is, heartily to love each other, and to live in peace and concord, without which we have no right to bear the glorious name of Chriſtians. IV. *Chriſt*'s foretelling that *Peter* would deny him, is a freſh proof that nothing is hid from our Lord, and that he knows us better than we know ourſelves. St. *Peter* did not think himſelf capable of ſo great unbelief, and yet he fell that very night. Such an example ſhould teach us all to diſtruſt ourſelves, and to be continually upon our guard, humbly acknowledging our weakneſs.

CHAP. XIV.

THIS chapter, and the two following, contain the diſcourſe that *Chriſt* had with his diſciples the evening before his death. His deſign in this diſcourſe was to comfort them, to ſtrengthen their faith, and to fill them with courage and zeal, to the end, they might not be offended at his death; and that afterwards they might be in a condition to preach the Goſpel, without fearing the hatred of the world.

In this fourteenth chapter, I. *Chriſt* makes mention to the apoſtles of the glory to which he was going to be exalted, and to which he would exalt them one day. II. He tells them, that they ought to be convinced by his miracles that God had ſent him, and that they themſelves ſhould do as great miracles as his. And, III. He exhorts them to keep his commandments; he promiſes to ſend them the Holy Ghoſt, aſſures them they ſhould ſee him quickly again, and talks to them of the happineſs of thoſe that ſhall perſevere in his

love, and obſerve his word. IV. He gives them his bleſſing and his peace, and exhorts them to rejoice at his departure. This diſcourſe being finiſhed, he leaves *Jeruſalem*, and goes with his apoſtles towards the mount of *Olives*.

REFLECTIONS.

IN this and the following chapters, we obſerve in general the great love *Chriſt* had for his diſciples, and which he bears to all thoſe that love him and believe in him. The duties which this diſcourſe of our Lord engage us to, are, I. To meditate continually upon the glory to which he his exalted in the heavens, and to the enjoyment of which he declares he will likewiſe receive us: to aſpire to the ſame glory, by following the way that leads to it; and, ſince he himſelf is that way that leadeth to life, to adhere inviolably to him. II. The ſecond duty, which is indeed the ſum of religion, is, ardently to love our Saviour, and to ſhew the ſincerity of our love by keeping his commandments. III. The promiſe which *Chriſt* made of ſending his Spirit, after his aſcenſion, did not reſpect the apoſtles alone, who by the gift of the Holy Ghoſt were to have a power of working miracles conferred on them, but had ſome reſpect to all the faithful, into whoſe hearts he does ſend his ſpirit of comfort and ſanctification. It is our duty, therefore, to implore the guidance and aſſiſtance of the Holy Ghoſt, remembering what *Chriſt* ſaid, that the world cannot know nor receive that Holy Spirit; and that therefore, if we deſire to obtain it, we muſt purify our hearts from the love of the world. IV. We ſhould conſider, that as our Lord promiſed his diſciples to return to them after his reſurrection, ſo he will come to us at the laſt day: that then his elect ſhall be filled with comfort and joy; and, that, in expectation of his glorious coming, our chief care ought to be to perſevere in his love, and to obey his divine commandments. The laſt part of this chapter teaches us that *Chriſt* communicates and unites himſelf in the

moſt

moſt intimate manner to all thoſe that love him and keep his word; that he heaps his favours upon them, and grants them his bleſſing and his peace. A due reflection upon all theſe precious advantages, ought to inflame us with love for our gracious Redeemer, and convince us that all our happineſs conſiſts in being faithful to him, in loving him, and living in communion with him.

CHAP. XV.

OUR Lord does four things in this chapter. I. He repreſents, by the compariſon of the vine and the branches, the union between him and his diſciples. II. He exhorts them to preſevere in this union, and in his love, to keep his commandments, and particularly to love one another. III. He tells them, he had choſen them to preach the Goſpel throughout all the earth with wonderful ſucceſs. IV. He warns them, that they ſhould be expoſed to perſecution and the hatred of the world; but, for their encouragement, he repreſents to them, that he had been expoſed to the ſame hatred, and promiſes them the aſſiſtance of the Holy Ghoſt, which he would ſend after he left them.

REFLECTIONS.

THE following reflections may be made upon the four parts of this chapter. I. The firſt, which contains the ſimilitude of the vine and the branches, denotes the ſtrictneſs of the union between *Chriſt* and the faithful; that all our happineſs depends upon this union; that we muſt partake of the ſpirit and life of *Chriſt*, before we can bring forth fruit to the glory of God, and anſwerable to the advantage of being his diſciples; and that ſuch as are not united to him by faith, and that bear no fruit, ſhall be cut off and caſt into the fire, like withered branches. II. The ſecond part teaches us, that our great and principal duty is to continue in the love of *Chriſt*, to keep his commandments, and to love each other; continually ſetting be-

fore us, for this purpoſe, the example of his great love to us, which engaged him to lay down his life for us. III. *Chriſt*'s telling his apoſtles, that he had choſen them to eſtabliſh his kingdom throughout the world, is a very clear proof of the divinity of the Goſpel, ſince the preaching of the apoſtles was attended with the converſion of ſo many nations; but we ought likewiſe to conſider, that our Lord has choſen and called us all, that we may bring forth fruit unto holineſs, and that each of us may labour with all his might to promote his kingdom, and the knowledge of him. IV. The laſt part of this chapter inſtructs us in two things: The one is, that the world uſually hates thoſe that love *Chriſt*, and that lead a godly life; but we muſt not think that ſtrange, ſince our Lord himſelf has likewiſe been expoſed to the ſame hatred. The other, that ſince *Chriſt* has ſpoken, and the Goſpel has been preached to men, thoſe who continue in infidelity and in corruption are without excuſe, becauſe they reject the teſtimony of the Son of God, of the Holy Spirit, and of the apoſtles, and wilfully ſhut their eyes againſt the truth.

CHAP. XVI.

I. *CHRIST* continues to warn the apoſtles, that they ought to prepare themſelves to be perſecuted, and even to ſuffer death. II. To alleviate their ſorrow at his departure, he promiſes them the Holy Ghoſt; and tells them, that that Holy Spirit would condemn the unbelieving world, and enable them more perfectly to know the truths which he had taught them, and to declare them to mankind. III. He adds, that he was to leave them for a little time, but that they would ſoon ſee him again, when he ſhould riſe from the dead; that then they would be filled with joy; that he would beſtow on them new favours, and procure for them the moſt precious gifts. IV. This diſcourſe of *Chriſt* ſerved to comfort the apoſtles, and to ſtrengthen their faith.

REFLECTIONS.

LET us learn from this chapter, I. That as the apoſtles were to be expoſed to great perſecutions, ſo likewiſe true believers muſt expect to feel the effects of the hatred of thoſe who neither know nor love the Lord *Jeſus*. II. That it was neceſſary for our happineſs that *Chriſt* ſhould leave the world, that he might enter into his glory, and ſend us the Holy Ghoſt, and eſtabliſh his kingdom. III. What *Chriſt* ſays of the Holy Spirit, that *when he is come, he will reprove the world of ſin, and of righteouſneſs, and of judgment*; ſignifies, that the coming of the Holy Ghoſt, and the preaching of the apoſtles, would ſerve to convict the *Jews* of their wilful and inexcuſable unbelief; to prove that *Jeſus* was the Son of God; and to deſtroy the kingdom of the devil. This is what actually happened; whereby we plainly ſee, that the doctrine of our Lord proceeds from God. IV. The excellent promiſes which *Chriſt* made the apoſtles, of filling them abundantly with the gifts of the Holy Ghoſt, have likewiſe been accompliſhed, and the effects thereof appeared in the wonderful ſucceſs of their preaching. V. We may obſerve, that the apoſtles did not underſtand what our Saviour meant, when he told them, that in a little while they ſhould not ſee him; and again, in a little while they ſhould ſee him; and that he was going to his Father, and that then they ſhould be entirely comforted; but theſe words, as well as the foregoing, were perfectly explained by his reſurrection, by his aſcenſion, and by their glorious conſequences. Theſe promiſes, which confirmed the faith of the apoſtles, ought alſo to ſtrengthen ours and induce us to believe, that although *Jeſus Chriſt* be at preſent abſent from us, he will not be ſo always; that, if we perſevere in his love, he will procure for us from God the moſt valuable favours; and that, as he returned to his apoſtles after his reſurrection, he will likewiſe return to us at his ſecond and laſt coming, to bring us into the glory of his kingdom,

CHAP.

CHAP. XVII.

THIS chapter contains the prayer which *Chriſt* offered to God his Father before he ſuffered death, which conſiſts of three articles: I. He prays for himſelf, and deſires to be received into heavenly glory, that God may be glorified thereby. II. He prays for the apoſtles, whom he was going to leave, and begs of his Father to protect them, and to ſanctify them, to the end that they may perſevere in the faith, and be enabled to preach the Goſpel throughout the world, without fearing perſecutions. III. He prays for all thoſe that ſhould believe in him, and that ſhould receive the preaching of the apoſtles; and he deſires of God, that the apoſtles, and all the faithful, may be always united to him, and to one another, by faith, and by charity; and that they might alſo be admitted to that glory into which he was to enter, and remain for ever with him.

REFLECTIONS.

IN the former part of this excellent prayer, which our Lord made when he was juſt going to offer himſelf as a ſacrifice upon the croſs, there are two things to be conſidered: Firſt, That the Chriſtian Religion conſiſts in knowing the one only true God, and *Jeſus Chriſt* whom he has ſent; that this is the only way to obtain eternal life; and therefore, that faith in God and *Chriſt* is abſolutely neceſſary to ſalvation. We obſerve further, our Lord's great zeal for the glory of God, and the glorious reward he expected after his ſufferings. By this example of our Saviour, we ſhould learn to be animated with the ſame zeal, and to glorify God upon earth as much as we are able, that we may be admitted into that glory, which he has prepared for his elect before the foundation of the world. II. We ſee in this prayer, the great love that *Chriſt* bore to his diſciples, and with how much warmth and tenderneſs he recommended them to the protection of God

God his Father before he left them. The event made it appear that the prayers of our Lord was heard, ſince, except *Judas*, whoſe infidelity he had foretold, all the apoſtles perſevered in the truth which they had embraced, and the zeal they exerted had ſo wonderful ſucceſs in the converſion of men. III. But what we ought above all to obſerve here, and what chiefly concerns us, is, that our Lord did not only pray for the apoſtles, but for all ſuch as ſhould believe in him, and that ſhould receive their preaching. Hence we ſee, how dear the faithful are to *Chriſt*, the care he takes of them, and the deſire he has to render them partakers of that glory which he now enjoys. This ought to fill all thoſe who truly love the Lord *Jeſus*, with firm confidence and unſpeakable joy. But it muſt be carefully obſerved, that *Chriſt* only prays thus for true believers; and that he himſelf declared, that he did not pray for the men of this world, for unbelievers. If therefore, we deſire to be of the number of thoſe for whom *Chriſt* makes this prayer, and for whom he intercedes in heaven, we muſt ſeparate ourſelves from the world, we muſt be joined to *Chriſt* by a true faith, and to our neighbours by a ſincere love, and perſevere in the communion of God our Father, and of *Jeſus Chriſt* our Saviour, to the end of our lives.

CHAP. XVIII.

I. *CHRIST* is taken in the garden. II. He is afterwards carried before the council of the *Jews*. III. And next before *Pilate*, who refuſed at firſt to condemn him. IV. We find here likewiſe St. *Peter*'s denial.

REFLECTIONS.

IN this chapter there are four principal things to be conſidered: I. That our Lord cauſed thoſe that came to apprehend him to fall down to the earth by one word only. St. *John* takes notice, that *Chriſt* gave

gave this mark of his power, to ſecure his apoſtles from being hurt by thoſe who came to ſeize him; and to ſhew them that he could, if he had pleaſed, eſcape death. II. The ſecond reflection relates to the behaviour of St. *Peter*, who drew his ſword in the defence of his maſter, and a little while after denied him. This action ſhews that this apoſtle had zeal, but his zeal was not according to knowledge, nor without great mixture of weakneſs. This action furniſhes us with two inſtructions; one is, that if *Chriſt* blamed what this apoſtle did, upon an occaſion that ſeemed lawful, it being to reſiſt thoſe that would unjuſtly have taken away his Maſter's life; all actions of violence and revenge are unlawful, and there is nothing that can authorize them; and that patience and meekneſs is the character of *Chriſt*'s diſciples. The other is, that thoſe who abound in zeal and good intentions, may greatly fall, when they preſume too much upon themſelves, and do not guard againſt temptations by watching and prayer; which was St. *Peter*'s caſe. III. In the manner in which they proceeded againſt our Lord, when he was brought before the council of the *Jews*, it plainly appears that he was innocent, and that the *Jews* only ſought for a pretence to condemn him; but, it is to be obſerved, that our Lord ſubmitted to their judgment, though it was unjuſt, and to their outrages, exerting on that occaſion, wonderful patience and meekneſs. This is a noble leſſon to us of patience and reſignation, and we ought to conform ourſelves to it. IV. It is to be obſerved, in the laſt place, that when *Jeſus* was ſent before *Pilate*, that governor would not condemn him at firſt; and that having aſked our Lord, whether he was the king of the *Jews*, he anſwered he was ſo, but that his kingdom was not of this world. Theſe circumſtances ſerve to ſhew the innocence of *Chriſt*; and the confeſſion he made in the preſence of *Pilate*, teaches us that we muſt always make a free confeſſion of the truth, though we were ſure thereby to draw upon ourſelves the hatred of the world; imitating the example of

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our Saviour, who, as St. *Paul* takes notice, *before* Pontius Pilate *witneſſed a good confeſſion*, and ſaid, *he came into the world to bear witneſs unto the truth*; though this confeſſion was to be the cauſe both of his condemnation and death.

CHAP. XIX. 1—26.

PILATE cauſes our Lord to be ſcourged, and makes the ſoldiers treat him with indignity and contempt, thinking thereby to pacify the prieſts and the chief of the *Jews*. He declares to them, he found him innocent, and endeavours to ſave his life; but they inſiſting upon his being put to death, he conſents, at laſt, that he ſhould be crucified.

REFLECTIONS.

IN the hiſtory of the condemnation of *Chriſt*, we are to conſider the behaviour of *Pilate*, that of the *Jews*, and our Lord's behaviour: I. In the behaviour of *Pilate*, we ſee the character of an unjuſt judge; ſince that governor, believing *Chriſt* to be innocent, cauſed him to be ſcourged and treated with great contempt. He thought by this to content the *Jews*, and prevail upon them not to inſiſt upon his being crucified. But the *Jews*, ſeeing *Pilate*'s irreſolution, and the regard he had for them, preſſed him ſtill more; and thus *Pilate*, after having already committed one unjuſt action, by ſcourging our Saviour, engaged himſelf in the guilt of a much more crying one, by condemning him to be put to death. Condeſcending to the deſires of wicked men, makes them more bold and enterprizing; and, when men have once begun to do wickedly, they always go farther and farther; one ſin leads them on to ſtill greater, till at laſt they proceed to the higheſt crimes. All this ſhews how dangerous it is to act againſt light, and the conviction of our conſcience; to ſhew a complaiſance for the wicked

wicked in evil things; and to ſeek for evaſions and expedients when we are to do our duty, and to reſiſt temptation. II. The behaviour of the *Jews*, who could not be appeaſed either by the remonſtrances of *Pilate*, or by what *Chriſt* had ſuffered, and who continued to require that he ſhould be crucified, ſhews, that when men abandon themſelves to their paſſions, and when they have once taken their reſolution, be it never ſo bad, they will give ear to nothing, but engage themſelves deeper and deeper in it, till at laſt they compaſs their deſigns. III. The behaviour of *Chriſt*, the great patience, moderation, and meekneſs with which he ſubmitted to all the cruel and unrighteous treatment of *Pilate*, and the *Jews*, ought to make a deep impreſſion upon us. This is a token of his great love, and an example of great weight, to make us patient, meek, moderate, and ſubmiſſive to the will of God, under all the evils that may befal us, even though we ſhould ſuffer through the malice and wickedneſs of men,

CHAP. XIX. 17—42.

ST. *John* gives us here an account of the crucifixion, death, and burial of our Lord,

REFLECTIONS.

THE hiſtory of the paſſion and death of our Saviour, is to be conſidered principally in theſe three views: I. As a ſacrifice which he offered to God for the expiation of our ſins, to deliver us from death, and procure us a title to everlaſting life. II. As an engagement to love this gracious Redeemer, who has ſo loved us; and to renounce ſin, which he came to deſtroy by his death. III. As an example of patience and humiliation, which we ought continually to ſet before our eyes. Beſides theſe general conſiderations, we may make the four following particular reflections upon

upon the circumſtances of this hiſtory. I. That the writing which was put upon the croſs in three languages, made known to all the world the cauſe of *Chriſt*'s condemnation, and, conſequently, his innocence. II. That the ſeveral circumſtances of his paſſion, and of his death, ſuch as the dividing his garments, his thirſting, his bones not being broken, and the piercing his ſide, had been foretold in the prophecies of the Old Teſtament. For which reaſon, the *Jews* ought to have obſerved, by all that then happened, that *Jeſus* was the Meſſiah promiſed by the prophets; and it is what we ought to be fully perſuaded of by the wonderful agreement between the predictions of the Old Teſtament, and their accompliſhment in the New, in the perſon of our Saviour. III. What *Chriſt* ſaid upon the croſs, to recommend the Bleſſed Virgin to St. *John*, ſhews the tender care our Lord took of his mother, and at the ſame time, his love to that apoſtle. IV. In the relation of the burial of our Saviour, the courage and boldneſs of *Joſeph* is very remarkable; who, though he had been juſt condemned and put to death, was not afraid to expreſs his reſpect for him; the ſame is very remarkable in *Nicodemus*, who had before been ſo timorous. The circumſtances of his burial ſerve alſo to prove the truth of his death and reſurrection. Laſtly, When we reflect upon the burial of our Lord, it ſhould teach us not to fear either the grave or death, knowing, if we die as he did, we ſhall alſo riſe as he did.

CHAP. XX.

I. *CHRIST* being riſen from the dead, appears firſt to *Mary Magdalen*. II. Next to the apoſtles, in the abſence of *Thomas*. III. And after that, to *Thomas* himſelf.

REFLECTIONS.

WE ſee in this chapter, how *Chriſt* ſhewed himſelf after his reſurrection, firſt, to *Mary Magdalen*, and then to all the apoſtles. *Mary Magdalen* was firſt informed of our Lord's reſurrection by an apparition of angels, and ſhe was the firſt who had the happineſs of ſeeing him after he was riſen. This was a reward for her piety and love to *Chriſt*; and thus does God make himſelf known to thoſe who love him, and ſincerely ſeek him. It appears from the account of St. *John*, that the apoſtles did not, at firſt, believe the reſurrection of our Lord, and that they were not fully convinced, till he had given them certain and repeated proofs of it. This we ſee particularly in the example of St. *Thomas*, who would not believe that *Chriſt* was riſen, until he had both ſeen him, and touched his hands, his feet, and his ſide; but, after he had thus ſatisfied himſelf of the truth, which he at firſt refuſed to believe, he worſhipped him as his Saviour and his God. Our Lord's appearing at ſeveral different times, ſerves to prove that he is really riſen from the dead, and to confirm the teſtimony which the apoſtles bore to this truth. *Chriſt* being thus raiſed, we can no longer doubt that he was the Son of God, and that he has made a perfect atonement for our ſins by his death. His reſurrection is an image, and an undoubted pledge of our own: and therefore ought mightily to ſtrengthen our faith and hope, and fill us with exceeding joy. Let faith in *Chriſt* riſen purify and ſanctify our hearts; and let us, after the example of *Mary* and the apoſtles, who were ſo exceedingly rejoiced to ſee their Maſter riſen, and who ſhewed ſo much zeal and love for him, worſhip him as our Lord and our God. So that, expreſſing the ſincerity of our faith by our obedience, we may attain that happineſs, which he has promiſed to all thoſe who truly believe in him.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXI.

I. *JESUS* appears to the apoſtles near the ſea of *Tiberias*, and gives them proofs of his reſurrection. II. He confirms St. *Peter* in his apoſtleſhip, and foretels what was to happen to that apoſtle, and to St. *John*, which finiſhes this Goſpel.

REFLECTIONS.

I. We ſee in this chapter, firſt, that our Lord was pleaſed to aſſure his apoſtles of his reſurrection, not only by ſhewing himſelf to them, and by eating in their preſence, but by giving them marks of his divine power. This ought to convince us more and more of that great truth upon which all our comfort depends. II. *Jeſus Chriſt*, before he reinſtated St. *Peter* in his apoſtleſhip, aſked him three times whether he loved him. Our Lord obliged him to make theſe three declarations, that this apoſtle might be more ſenſible of the ſin he had committed in denying him three times, and repair the ſcandal he had thereby given. This teaches us, that *Chriſt* pardons none but ſuch as confeſs their ſins, that repair them as well as they are able, and forſake them, and return to their duty. But what he chiefly requires of us, is, to love him with all our heart, ſo as to be able to ſay with St. *Peter*, *Lord, thou knoweſt all things, thou knoweſt that I love thee;* otherwiſe, we deſerve not to be called his diſciples. III. It may be further obſerved, that, when St. *Peter* had made this declaration, *Chriſt* re-eſtabliſhed him in his apoſtleſhip, ſaying to him, *Feed my ſheep.* He even foretold that he ſhould undergo martyrdom, which ſhewed, that the fidelity of this apoſtle ſhould thenceforwards be proof againſt all temptations. Thus God pardons all thoſe that truly repent; and thus he grants them new ſupplies of grace: wherefore, thoſe whom God has thus pardoned, ought zealouſly and inviolably to adhere to his ſervice all the reſt of their lives.

lives. We ſee, laſtly, that our Lord foretels, that St. *John* ſhould *tarry* till he came. This ſignified, that this apoſtle ſhould live till he had ſeen the deſtruction of *Jeruſalem*, and the ruin of the *Jews*. It was a privilege *Chriſt* thought fit to grant to this diſciple, whom he loved: And this promiſe was fulfilled, St. *John* having lived to a great age, and long after all the other apoſtles, and about thirty years after the deſtruction of *Jeruſalem*, and ſeen, before his death, the completion of all that he had heard his Lord foretel concerning this deſtruction, and the eſtabliſhment of his kingdom.

The end of the Goſpel according to St. JOHN.

THE

THE

ACTS

OF THE

APOSTLES.

ARGUMENT.

St. Luke *relates, in this Book, how the Chriſtian Religion prevailed, and was eſtabliſhed, after the aſcenſion of our Saviour; firſt at* Jeruſalem, *and afterwards in ſeveral other places, by the preaching of the Apoſtles, and chiefly by the miniſtry of St.* Peter *and St.* Paul. *This hiſtory contains that period of time which paſſed between the aſcenſion of* Chriſt, and *the firſt impriſonment of St.* Paul *at* Rome, *making the ſpace of about twenty-eight years.*

CHAP. I.

IN the firſt chapter St. *Luke* relates two things: I. The aſcenſion of our Lord. II. The choice of St. *Matthias* to the office of an apoſtle.

REFLEC-

REFLECTIONS *after reading the chapter.*

THE firſt part of this chapter teaches us, that our Lord being riſen, continued forty days upon earth, that he might the more fully convince the apoſtles of the truth of his reſurrection; and to give them neceſſary inſtructions. At the end of theſe forty days, he was carried up into heaven in their preſence, becauſe they were to be witneſſes of this great event; and angels appeared to them, aſſuring them, that *Jeſus* was aſcended into heaven, and that he would come from thence at the laſt day. This furniſhes us with the moſt convincing proofs of the reſurrection of our Lord, of his aſcenſion, and of the certainty of his laſt coming; theſe truths being atteſted by the apoſtles, by the angels, as well as by the wonderful effects that followed his exaltation to the heavenly glory. His aſcenſion ought to convince us, that he has a ſovereign authority over all things, and that his kingdom is ſpiritual and heavenly. It ſhould likewiſe engage us continually to raiſe our thoughts and our deſires towards that glorious manſion where our Lord is exalted at the right hand of his Father, and where he alſo prepares for us an everlaſting habitation; and to live in a conſtant practice of holineſs, in an expectation of his coming again. In the ſecond part of this chapter, there are two things principally to be obſerved: One, that religious aſſemblies are authoriſed by the example of the apoſtles, and the firſt diſciples of *Chriſt*; who, after his aſcenſion to heaven, did commonly meet together to pray. The other is, that our Lord had choſen twelve apoſtles, the firſt care of St. *Peter* and his colleagues was, to appoint an apoſtle in the place of *Judas*, that for this purpoſe, they made choice of two perſons, who had been witneſſes of the life and reſurrection of our Saviour; but that they caſt lots, and prayed the Lord to ſhew which of the two he had choſen, becauſe the apoſtles were to be choſen immediately by *Chriſt* himſelf.

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

ST. *Luke* relates four things in this chapter, I. How the apoſtles received the Holy Ghoſt upon the day of pentecoſt. II. St. *Peter*'s diſcourſe to the *Jews* on that day. III. The effect of this diſcourſe, which was the converſion of three thouſand perſons. IV. The condition the church of *Jeruſalem* was in at that time.

REFLECTIONS.

ON this chapter we muſt obſerve, I. That *Chriſt*, by the deſcent of the Holy Ghoſt on the apoſtles, fulfilled the promiſes he had made them of ſending a comforter to them after his departure, and gave them plain and undoubted proofs of his exaltation to heaven. He beſtowed on them the gift of ſpeaking all kinds of languages, to ſhew they were to preach the Goſpel to all the nations of the earth, and to put them in a capacity of doing it. This miracle happened on a ſolemn day, and in the preſence of a great multitude of people, who were come to *Jeruſalem* from ſeveral parts of the world, that the fame thereof might ſpread on all ſides, and diſpoſe men to receive the preaching of the apoſtles. II. The end and deſign of the diſcourſe which St. *Peter* made that day, was to teach the *Jews*, that what happened then was foretold by the prophet *Joel:* that that *Jeſus*, whom they had crucified, was riſen again: that God had exalted him to heaven: that it was he who had given his apoſtles the gift of tongues; and, that all mankind ought to look upon him as the Meſſiah, and as their Lord and King. This is alſo the ſum of the Goſpel, and what we ought to believe concerning *Jeſus Chriſt*. III. The converſion of thoſe three thouſand *Jews*, who were baptiſed on that day, was a ſurpriſing proof of the efficacy of St. *Peter*'s preaching; and their example ſhews, that a hearty ſorrow for ſin, and an humble, teachable diſpoſition, prepare the ſinner to obey the divine will, and is the character of true penitents, the

ſure way to amend their lives, and put them into the way of ſalvation. Laſtly, What St. *Luke* tells us in this chapter, of the piety of thoſe firſt Chriſtians, of their conſtant attendance upon prayer and the holy Euchariſt, and other religious exerciſes; of the admirable union there was among them; of their charity; and, in general, of the innocency of their lives and manners, deſerves our moſt ſerious attention. In all theſe reſpects thoſe firſt Chriſtians, which compoſed the church at *Jeruſalem*, are a pattern to all churches, and to Chriſtians of all times, to be zealous and conſtant in prayer, and all the parts of divine ſervice, to live in peace and concord, to practiſe works of charity, and to become acceptable to God and man, by purity of manners, and by holineſs of life.

CHAP. III.

THIS chapter contains. I. The account of a miracle done by St. *Peter* in healing a cripple. And, II. What this apoſtle ſaid to the *Jews*, to convince them that the ſaid miracle was wrought in the name of *Jeſus Chriſt*.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE curing this lame man ſhews us, that preſently after the aſcenſion of our Lord, the apoſtles proved before all the *Jews*, by illuſtrious miracles, that *Chriſt* was aſcended to heaven, and that he had given them power to work miracles like thoſe which he himſelf wrought. By this means the Goſpel continued to make great progreſs in *Jeruſalem*, all the people being aſtoniſhed at this miraculous cure. II. We obſerve in the diſcourſe of St. *Peter*, the zeal and boldneſs with which the apoſtle reproached the *Jews* for the crime they had committed in crucifying the Lord; and how he loudly declared, that this *Jeſus* was the Meſſiah, whoſe coming all the prophets had foretold. Thus we ought always to confeſs the name of our Lord and Saviour, and bear an authentic teſtimony to the truth.

III.

III. We ſee here, moreover, that though the *Jews* had crucified the Son of God, St. *Peter* exhorts them to repentance, and promiſes them, that their ſins ſhould be blotted out, provided they would be converted, and not obſtinately perſiſt in their unbelief. Whence we may infer, that the grace of God is freely offered to all thoſe who repent and amend, how wicked ſoever they have been. IV. And laſtly, St. *Peter* informs us, that *Chriſt* is that great prophet of whom *Moſes* ſpake, and of whom God ſaid, that we ought to hear whatever he ſhall ſay; and that thoſe who refuſe to hear him, ſhall be cut off from his people. This is what St. *Peter* takes notice of in the laſt verſe of this chapter, ſaying, God has ſent his Son *Jeſus* to bleſs us, by turning every one of us from our iniquities. The Son of God, then, was ſent to turn men from their iniquities; and, therefore, without this, we can have no ſhare in the bleſſings procured for us by our great Redeemer.

CHAP. IV.

ST. *Luke* relates, I. The impriſonment of the apoſtles St. *Peter* and St. *John*. II. Their appearing before the council of the *Jews*, and what happened there. III. A prayer which they made to God, after they were ſtrictly charged to ſpeak no more in the name of *Chriſt Jeſus*. IV. The ſtate of the church of *Jeruſalem;* and, above all, the wonderful love and charity that reigned there.

REFLECTIONS.

IN this chapter we ſee, I. The accompliſhment of what our Saviour had told the apoſtles, namely, that they ſhould be caſt into priſon, and brought before magiſtrates for his ſake; but it is likewiſe to be obſerved, that the ſevere treatment they met with did not ſhake their conſtancy; and that the number of Chriſtians increaſed daily, notwithſtanding the oppoſition of the *Jews*. II. St. *Luke* informs us, that the

apoſtles appearing before the council, ſpake there with a holy boldneſs, and with ſuch evidence, that their enemies were amazed at it, and had nothing to charge them with. This was an effect of that divine power with which the apoſtles were endowed, and of the promiſes *Chriſt* had made them to aſſiſt them, and give them ſuch wiſdom as could not be reſiſted. III. The zeal which the apoſtles ſhewed upon the magiſtrates forbidding them to preach any longer the Goſpel, and their anſwer, that it was not fit to obey man rather than God, is an example, which ſhews that nothing ſhould hinder us from obeying God; and, in particular, that the miniſters of the Goſpel, who, through fear of men, or any worldly motive, are afraid to ſay or do what God commands, are cowards and prevaricators. IV. The fervent prayer which the apoſtles offered up to God, to implore his aſſiſtance, ſhews the courage and confidence with which they were animated. And the tokens God gave them of his preſence and favour, by ſhaking the place where they were aſſembled, was a confirmation to them that God heard and accepted their prayer, and that he would always protect them. Thoſe who fear God and ſeek his glory, are ſure to find a powerful aſſiſtance and relief in prayer. God never fails to hear thoſe who thus call upon him; and, when we defend his cauſe, we ought not to fear the vain efforts of men. V. What is ſaid at the end of this chapter, about the union and agreement among the believers at *Jeruſalem*, and of the uſe they made of their goods, ſhews, that the ſpirit of Chriſtianity is a ſpirit of peace and concord, that true Chriſtians have but one heart and one ſoul, and that they willingly and freely exerciſe charity toward the neceſſitous.

CHAP. V.

I. ST. *Luke* gives an account of the ſin of *Ananias* and *Sapphira*, and the puniſhment God inflicted on them. II. He makes mention next of the miracles of

of the apoſtles, and the wonderful progreſs of the Goſpel at *Jeruſalem.* III. The apoſtles are impriſoned a ſecond time, but God delivers them by an angel, and they continue to preach the Goſpel. IV. They are brought again before the council, which condemns them to be whipped, and forbids them to preach any longer the doctrine of *Chriſt.*

REFLECTIONS.

THERE are three reflections to be made upon the hiſtory of *Ananias:* I. God ſtruck that man and his wife dead for having lied to St. *Peter*, that their example might keep in awe all the members of the church, and ſupport the authority of the apoſtles in the beginning of the preaching of the Goſpel, and to ſhew the divinity of the doctrine they preached. II. This event teaches us, that God knows mens hearts, and the moſt hidden things; and that though men may be deceived, yet he cannot; and that thoſe who lie to men, and particularly to their ſpiritual guides, do lie to God, and expoſe themſelves to his vengeance. III. It appears from hence, that it is a great ſin to make uſe of falſhood and deceit in the exerciſe of charity; that it is in our own power to give, or withhold our hand; but, when we once have devoted a thing to God, and to religious uſes, we are not allowed to take it back, nor even to retain the ſmalleſt part of it. IV. We muſt particularly obſerve what is ſaid in this chapter concerning the ſurpriſing miracles wrought by the apoſtles, and the prodigious increaſe of the church of *Jeruſalem*, as alſo the love and reverence that every one had for the Chriſtians: theſe are authentic proofs of the divinity of the Chriſtian doctrine, and its efficacy. And ſince this progreſs of the Goſpel was the fruit, not only of the miracles of the apoſtles, but likewiſe of the union that reigned among the faithful, and of the innocency of their manners, we may learn from hence, how effectual the good lives of Chriſtians are, to render the religion of *Chriſt* venerable,

able, and to eſtabliſh it in the world. The apoſtles were a ſecond time impriſoned, but God, in a miraculous manner, cauſed the gates of the priſon to be opened by an angel. This was a freſh proof of the divine protection, which muſt needs have filled them with joy and confidence, and ought to have convinced their enemies, that it was in vain to oppoſe the preaching of the Goſpel. We ſee that the apoſtles, coming out of the priſon, went immediately to teach in the temple, notwithſtanding the charge they had received; and, that being ſummoned for it before the council, they ſpoke there with great wiſdom and boldneſs, declaring, that they were obliged to obey God rather than men. This inſtance of courage and zeal in the apoſtles, is a leſſon to us always to follow the dictates of our conſcience, without being afraid of the threatenings of men; and that neither the orders nor interdicts of magiſtrates ſhould ever hinder us from obeying God, and doing what he commands us. Obſerve further. That the council being enraged againſt the apoſtles, would have put them to death, but God made uſe of the prudent advice of *Gamaliel*, to deliver them from the danger that threatened them. The manner in which this wiſe ſenator addreſſed the council, ſhews, that pious and moderate advice ought to be followed; that we ought never to do any thing through paſſion and raſh zeal, eſpecially in matters of religion: that the deſigns of which God is not the author, are ſooner or later defeated of themſelves; but that thoſe which proceed from him are infallibly fulfilled in ſpite of the oppoſition of men; and that thoſe who withſtand them fight againſt God. The laſt reflection is, that as the apoſtles, having been condemned to be whipped, rejoiced that they had the honour to ſuffer ſuch a diſgrace for the ſake of *Chriſt*, and continued to preach the Goſpel; thus ought we conſtantly, and with joy, to bear the evils which our duty may expoſe us to, and perſevere in it.

CHAP.

CHAP. VI.

THIS chapter contains two parts. I. In the firſt we read of the appointment of the order of deacons, whoſe office it was to diſtribute the alms of the church. And, in the ſecond, the accuſation againſt St. *Stephen* before the council of the *Jews*.

REFLECTIONS.

I. WE have here an account of the inſtitution of deacons, who were appointed by the apoſtles to diſtribute the alms of the faithful. Though this office be at this time aboliſhed in moſt Chriſtian churches, through the fault of men, and the diſorder that has crept into it in ſeveral reſpects, it is nevertheleſs a divine inſtitution, and very uſeful for the edification of the church. II. Since God thought fit that the diſtribution of alms ſhould be committed to prudent perſons, and ſuch as were filled with the Holy Ghoſt; it appears that charity is a moſt important duty, that the alms of the faithful ought to be diſtributed with great prudence and wiſdom, and that it ſhould be done by men of integrity, and that fear God, and that they ſhould be appointed by the church; and, in general, none ſhould be put into eccleſiaſtical offices, but perſons that have a good teſtimony, and that are of known piety and probity. III. St. *Stephen*, one of the ſeven deacons, a man remarkable for his faith and zeal, and the miracles he wrought, was not long before he felt the hatred of the *Jews*. He was accuſed of being an enemy to God and the law of *Moſes*, and brought before the council to be condemned; but he appeared before them with a holy boldneſs, and in ſuch a manner as ſurpriſed his very judges. Good men have in all ages been expoſed to the hatred and calumnies of the wicked; but their injuſtice and violence towards them, does not hinder them from diſcharging their duty with courage, nor from fulfilling the obligations of their calling and of their conſcience,

CHAP.

CHAP. VII.

THIS chapter contains, I. The diſcourſe St. *Stephen* made before the council of the *Jews:* And, II. The relation of his martyrdom and death.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE deſign of St. *Stephen*'s diſcourſe before the council, was to prove, that he was neither an enemy to God nor the law, as he was accuſed to be; but that he worſhipped the God of *Abraham*, and of the patriarchs. II. That *Chriſt* was the Meſſiah that was to be born of the poſterity of *Abraham*, and whoſe coming *Moſes* and the prophets had foretold. III. That the covenant of God, and his ſervice, were not confined to the nation of the *Jews*, nor to the temple of *Jeruſalem*, nor to the ceremonial worſhip which *Moſes* had preſcribed. IV. That the *Jews* had at all times been rebellious againſt God; that they had rejected and perſecuted the prophets; and that therefore it was not ſtrange that they ſhould reject *Chriſt*, and perſecute his ſervants. We obſerve in this diſcourſe of St. *Stephen*, his great zeal, and the holy liberty which he took in reproaching the *Jews* for the hardneſs of their hearts, though he knew very well, in ſpeaking thus, he expoſed himſelf to their rage, and to the danger of loſing his life. The *Jews* were ſo enraged, that they condemned him to be ſtoned; but God, for his encouragement, having cauſed him to ſee heaven open, and *Jeſus Chriſt* ſitting on his right hand, he endured with conſtancy that cruel death, calling upon the Lord with his laſt breath, and praying for thoſe who put him to death. This death of the firſt martyr of the church, ſhould teach us to undergo with courage all the evils which the profeſſion of the truth may bring upon us, and even death itſelf, if we be called to it; to pardon thoſe that do us the greateſt harm, and to pray for them. This example is a further proof how ſweet the death of true believers is, and with what comfort it is attained;

attended; which ſhould greatly encourage us to godlineſs, that at our laſt hour we may likewiſe commit our ſouls into the hands of the Lord *Jeſus*, and ſleep in peace, in expectation of the bleſſed reſurrection.

CHAP. VIII.

ST. *Luke* relates here, I. The perſecution that was raiſed againſt the church of *Jeruſalem* after the death of St. *Stephen*. And, II. How St. *Philip* preached the Goſpel at *Samaria*. III. The hiſtory of the converſion of a ſtranger, a great man, who was treaſurer of *Candace*, queen of *Ethiopia*.

REFLECTIONS.

I. WE find that the death of St. *Stephen*, and the perſecution that was raiſed againſt the church of *Jeruſalem*, turned to the advancement of the Goſpel, ſince the believers, who were thereupon diſperſed, preached the word of God in ſeveral places. Thus the perſecutions which the firſt enemies of the church raiſed againſt it, contributed towards its increaſe, and to the ſpreading the religion of *Chriſt* more and more. II. What is ſaid of the credit which the people of *Samaria* gave to *Simon* the magician, ſhews, that they who know not the truth, are eaſily ſeduced by impoſtors, but the change that happened in that city, after St. *Philip* had preached the Goſpel there, ſhews, that truth will triumph over error and falſhood. St. *Luke* obſerves, that *Simon* himſelf deſired to be baptiſed, being ſurpriſed at the miracles wrought by St. *Philip*, which proves, that the wicked are ſometimes affected with the excellency of the Goſpel, ſo far as even to embrace the profeſſion of it; but not acting upon good principles, their converſion is not ſincere. It is added, that *Simon* offered money to St. *Peter*, to obtain the power of communicating the Holy Ghoſt, and of working miracles; and that St. *Peter* being filled with indignation, denounced the judgment of God againſt him; upon which we muſt obſerve, that

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it is a deteſtable impiety to make religion ſubſervient to covetouſneſs and ambition, and to pretend to buy or ſell holy things, after what manner ſoever. Nevertheleſs, St. *Peter* exhorted *Simon* to repent, and even that wicked man, frighted with that heavy denunciation, intreated the apoſtles to intercede for him. This teaches us, that we ought never wholly to abandon the greateſt ſinners, nor refuſe them the aſſiſtance of our exhortations and prayers. III. God at that time called an officer of queen *Candace* to the Chriſtian Faith, to ſhew that the Goſpel would be ſoon preached to all nations; and, by means of this man, to ſpread the true religion throughout *Ethiopia*. This great man, who was one of the Gentile proſelytes, who renounced idolatry, was come to worſhip God at *Jeruſalem*, and was employed in reading the Scriptures, when God ſent *Philip* to inſtruct him. We may learn from hence, that Providence takes a particular care of thoſe who have good intentions; and that God grants greater meaſures of his grace to thoſe that make a right uſe of what they have already received, and ſeek the truth in ſincerity. The deſire which the eunuch expreſſed, to underſtand a paſſage of *Iſaiah* that he was reading, and the docility with which he hearkened to *Philip*, ſhews, that every one muſt labour to be inſtructed in the truths of ſalvation, as well by himſelf as by the aſſiſtance of others; and that we ought not to neglect the inſtructions of ſuch miniſters as God has appointed. The eunuch, after having heard *Philip*, deſired to be baptized; and, after he had made an open profeſſion of his faith, was baptized. Thoſe who love truth, as ſoon as it is made known to them, ought to embrace the profeſſion of it, and never delay the diſcharge of their duty. Laſtly, As this eunuch, after he was baptized, returned with joy unto his own country, we ought alſo highly to eſteem the happineſs we enjoy in being called to faith in *Chriſt*; and the advantage of being made members of his church, ſhould be all our comfort, and all our joy.

CHAP.

CHAP. IX. 1—22.

THIS is the hiſtory of the converſion of St. *Paul.*

REFLECTIONS.

WE ought moſt carefully to attend to this hiſtory, and conſider, I. That St. *Paul*, who was ſo excellent an apoſtle, was, before his converſion, while he was ſtill a *Jew*, a declared enemy of the Chriſtian Religion, and a ſevere perſecutor of the Chriſtians. This apoſtle tells us himſelf, that God called him in that condition, that he might make him an illuſtrious example of his mercy towards ſinners. Nevertheleſs, it muſt be remembered, that if *Saul* perſecuted the church, it was through ignorance and a falſe zeal, whilſt he even thought that he did what was pleaſing to God; as for the reſt of his life, it was unblameable. When men ſin not through malice and obſtinacy, but through ignorance and the force of prejudice, they are more ſuſceptible of God's mercy, and more eaſily recovered from that ſtate. II. The means which the Lord made uſe of for *Saul*'s converſion, are very remarkable. When he was going to *Damaſcus* to perſecute the Chriſtians, *Chriſt* ſtopped him near that city, by an apparition that filled him with terror; he ſpoke to him from heaven, and ſtruck him with blindneſs. Our Lord proceeded in this manner, becauſe the diſpoſition and temper of *Saul* was ſuch as made it neceſſary to uſe very violent methods to cure him of his prejudices, and to render him tractable. Thus God, in his goodneſs and wiſdom, makes uſe of the moſt proper means to bring back ſinners from their errors. III. Theſe words, *Saul, Saul, why perſecuteſt thou me?* ſhew, that *Chriſt* looks upon that which is done againſt his members, and againſt his church, as done againſt himſelf; and *Saul*'s anſwer, *Lord, what wouldeſt thou have me to do?* expreſſes the humility and docility of ſinners who are truly ſenſible of their ſins. When God calls them they obey,

obey, and give up themſelves intirely to him, and follow his commands. IV. It muſt be conſidered, that as ſoon as God had prepared *Saul* to hearken to him, and to receive what ſhould be told him, he ſent him to *Ananias* to be informed by him what he was to do, and that in the mean time, he prepared *Ananias*, by a viſion, to go and viſit *Saul* and inſtruct him; thus God diſpoſed matters with great wiſdom to finiſh the work of *Saul*'s converſion. V. Laſtly, *Saul*, after faſting and praying three days, recovered his ſight, and was inſtructed and baptized by *Ananias;* and preſently after began to preach the Goſpel in the ſynagogues of the *Jews*. We ought to admire the power and goodneſs of God in this event, ſo happy for St. *Paul*, and ſo beneficial to the whole church; and this great and ſudden change which was wrought in this apoſtle, ſhews, that ſuch as are ſincerely converted, do intirely alter their opinion and behaviour, giving open and certain proofs of the ſincerity of their converſion.

CHAP. IX. 23—43.

I. ST. *Paul*, after his converſion, being perſecuted by the *Jews* at *Damaſcus*, went to *Jeruſalem*, from whence he was driven by a freſh perſecution, and forced to fly to *Ceſarea*, and from thence to *Tarſus*. II. St. *Luke* deſcribes the happy condition of the churches of *Judea*, and of the neighbouring parts. And, III. The miracle of the healing of *Eneas*, and the raiſing of *Tabitha* from the dead.

REFLECTIONS.

FROM this portion of Scripture we may gather, I. That as ſoon as St. *Paul* was converted, and began to preach the Goſpel, he was perſecuted by the *Jews*. God thought fit, by that means, to try the fidelity of this apoſtle, and to teach him to ſuffer for *Jeſus Chriſt*. Thus it generally happens to thoſe who are reſolved to follow *Chriſt*, and lead a godly life; they are expoſed

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to the hatred of the world, and to many trials, but none of theſe things ſurpriſe them; they perſevere in their duty in ſpite of oppoſition, as *Saul*, in ſpite of the rage of the *Jews*, continued to preach the Goſpel, even in the city of *Jeruſalem*. II. What St. *Luke* ſays of the happy ſtate of the churches of *Judea*, *Galilee*, and *Samaria*, ſuggeſts two reflections; one, that if God permits the church to be perſecuted, he likewiſe gives it ſome relaxation; the other, that churches are happy and flouriſhing when they walk in the fear of the Lord, and the gifts of the Holy Ghoſt are multiplied in them. III. The two miracles related at the end of this chapter, prove, that the apoſtles wrought the ſame miracles as our Lord had done whilſt he was upon earth, which contributed to the converſion of a great number of people. We have particularly, in the hiſtory of *Tabitha*, a noble example of piety and works of charity for all Chriſtians, and eſpecially thoſe of her own ſex; and the raiſing to life this holy woman, may be looked on as a reward that God was pleaſed to grant to her piety and faith, and as a proof that ſhould confirm us in the belief of the reſurrection, and the hope of a better life.

CHAP. X.

THIS chapter contains an account of the converſion of *Cornelius* the centurion to the Chriſtian Religion. This man was a pagan by birth, but worſhipped the true God.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THIS hiſtory is recorded to ſhew us how the Goſpel began firſt to be preached to the Gentiles. We ſhould admire the method which Providence made uſe of for converting *Cornelius*. God ſent an angel to him, to direct him to ſend for St. *Peter*, and prepared that apoſtle to go to *Cornelius*; which he would not have done, if God had not revealed it to him, that he ought to look upon no man as unclean, and that

that the Goſpel was to be declared to the Gentiles as well as *Jews*. To this alluded the viſion of the veſſel, in which were creatures, that the *Jews*, by their law, were forbid to eat of. II. Beſides this general conſideration, it may be obſerved, that *Cornelius*, though engaged in the profeſſion of arms, was nevertheleſs a devout and charitable man, and one that feared God; for which reaſon God ſent an angel, to aſſure him his prayers and alms were had in remembrance, and brought him to the knowledge of *Chriſt* by the miniſtry of St. *Peter*. We may learn from hence, how acceptable to God works of piety and charity are, and that he beſtows greater light, and more grace on thoſe who have an upright heart, and call upon him, and fear him. III. St. *Peter*'s diſcourſe to *Cornelius* and his friends, comprehends the ſubſtance of the doctrine which the apoſtles preached, that God had ſent his Son to bring ſalvation to the *Jews*, that they had put him to death, but that he was riſen again, and was to be the judge of quick and dead. Theſe are the moſt important truths of religion, which ought to be received by all Chriſtians. They repreſent faith in *Chriſt*, and holineſs of life, as the only means of ſalvation; which is particularly pointed at in theſe words of St. *Peter*; *That God is no reſpecter of perſons, but in every nation, he that feareth him, and worketh righteouſneſs, is accepted with him.* And, that *Whoſoever believes in Chriſt, ſhall receive remiſſion of ſins through his name.* IV. The attention, the ſubmiſſion, and obedience with which *Cornelius*, and all his houſe, heard St. *Peter*, ought to teach us to receive the word of God with the ſame diſpoſitions when it is declared to us. V. While the apoſtle was ſpeaking to *Cornelius*, the Holy Ghoſt came upon them that heard the word, and they received the gift of tongues. God, by working the ſame kind of miracle in behalf of the Gentiles, as he had done for the apoſtles on the day of Pentecoſt, moſt evidently ſhewed, that he intended to make the Gentiles

tiles alſo partakers of his grace; which obliges us to render thanks to God; us, I ſay, who were formerly heathens, foraſmuch as he then vouchſafed to admit the Gentiles into his covenant, and to pour forth his ſpirit and grace upon them as well as upon the *Jews*.

CHAP. XI.

THIS conſiſts of two parts: I. In the former we ſee that the *Jews* of *Jeruſalem*, who had been converted to the Chriſtian Religion, being offended that St. *Peter* ſhould go to *Cornelius*, that was a Gentile, they were informed by this apoſtle how God had ſhewed him, that he ſhould preach the Goſpel to *Cornelius*, and the ſucceſs of his preaching; at which the Chriſtians at *Jeruſalem* greatly rejoiced. II. In the latter part St. *Luke* relates, how the Goſpel ſpread itſelf into ſeveral places, and particularly at *Antioch*: he makes mention alſo of a prophet named *Agabus*, who foretold a famine.

REFLECTIONS.

We ſee, in the former part of this chapter, that the Chriſtians at *Jeruſalem* were offended at firſt, becauſe St. *Peter* had been with *Cornelius*; becauſe it was not lawful for the *Jews* to have any familiar intercourſe with the Gentiles. But when they knew that this apoſtle went to him by the order of God, and that even the Holy Ghoſt had been given to *Cornelius*, and thoſe that were with him, they were pacified, and rejoiced that God was pleaſed thus to call the Gentiles to ſalvation. This teaches us, that inſtead of being jealous of the favours that God beſtows upon others, we ought to rejoice, eſpecially when they are called to repentance and everlaſting life. This happy event, which occaſioned ſo much joy to the ſaints at *Jeruſalem*, and made them cry out, "God has then granted to the Gentiles repentance unto life!" ought ever to be matter of joy and

thankſgiving to us,' ſince it directly reſpects us. Upon the latter part of this chapter there are three things to be obſerved: The firſt is, That the diſperſion of the church of *Jeruſalem*, and the perſecution that was raiſed againſt the Chriſtians, contributed to ſpread the Goſpel in ſeveral places, and to eſtabliſh ſeveral churches, particularly the church of *Antioch*, where the diſciples of *Jeſus Chriſt* were firſt called Chriſtians. The ſecond, That theſe churches were founded and kept up by the miniſtry of *Barnabas*, of *Paul*, and other perſons that laboured for their edification. This ſhews, that the miniſtry of the ſervants of God is of great uſe in the church, provided it be performed by good men, and ſuch as are filled with faith, and the Holy Ghoſt, as were thoſe St. *Luke* mentions. The third conſideration relates to the prediction that *Agabus* made of a famine that was to happen. This prediction proves that God knows things future, and that nothing comes to paſs in this world but by his providential will. And the reſolution the Chriſtians took to make a collection for their brethren in *Judea*, is an example that ſhould ſtir us up to aſſiſt thoſe that are in want, and eſpecially thoſe that are our brethren, and the members of *Jeſus Chriſt;* and even to prevent their wants.

CHAP. XII.

ST. *Luke* relates three things in this chapter: I. The martyrdom of St. *James*, brother to St. *John*. II. The impriſonment of St. *Peter*, and his miraculous deliverance. III. The manner of king *Herod's* death.

REFLECTIONS.

IN this chapter we ſee, I. How the apoſtle St. *James*, as well as St. *Stephen*, ſealed the truth of the Goſpel with his blood; and that the Chriſtian Religion was eſtabliſhed by the ſufferings of thoſe that preached it, which confirms the truth and divinity of it.

II. God

II. God, who had permitted St. *James* to be put to death, did likewiſe permit St. *Peter* to be impriſoned by king *Herod*, but this apoſtle was miraculouſly delivered by an angel, who was ſent to open the priſon doors, and ſet him at liberty. This wonderful deliverance gives us occaſion to own, that though God does ſometimes allow the wicked to execute their deſigns, yet, when it pleaſes him, he reſtrains them, and ſets bounds to their wickedneſs, and that he always watches over his faithful ſervants. We likewiſe ſee by this event, how powerful prayer is, ſince the church of *Jeruſalem* obtained the deliverance of St. *Peter*, by the prayers they put up to God for him. III. The death of *Herod*, who was eaten of worms for a puniſhment of his pride, is worthy of our attention. This event, which is likewiſe related by *Joſephus*, the *Jewiſh* hiſtorian, ſhews, that God confounds the proud; and particularly that the perſecutors of the church do commonly make a fatal end; and that cruel and haughty princes, ſooner or later, receive the puniſhment due to their wickedneſs.

CHAP. XIII.

I. ST. *Paul* and St. *Barnabas* go from *Antioch* to *Cyprus*, and from thence to *Paphos*, where St. *Paul* ſmote a *Jewiſh* impoſtor with blindneſs, and where he converted to the faith the proconſul *Sergius Paulus*, who was the chief magiſtrate of that iſland. II. After this, St. *Paul*, coming to *Antioch* in *Piſidia*, preaches to the *Jews* of that city, ſhewing that God, according to the promiſes he had made to their fathers, had ſent *Jeſus Chriſt* into the world; that this *Jeſus*, whom they had crucified, was riſen again; and that all thoſe who ſhould believe in him, would obtain ſalvation. III. Several perſons, as well *Jews* as Gentiles, believing the preaching of St. *Paul*, the *Jews* were ſo enraged againſt him, as to drive him away and *Barnabas*; but the apoſtles declared to them, that

ſince they rejected the Goſpel, they would, from that time forward, preach it to the Gentiles, and ſo left them.

REFLECTIONS.

WE ſee, in the beginning of this chapter, that St. *Paul* and St. *Barnabas*, paſſing through ſeveral places of *Aſia* and *Greece*, by order of the Holy Ghoſt, and after that the miniſters of the church of *Antioch* had prayed and faſted, did ſucceſsfully preach the Goſpel in thoſe parts. Theſe are tokens of the divinity of their calling; but we have, eſpecially, one remarkable proof of the converſion of the governor of *Paphos*, and in the miraculous puniſhment of *Elimas*, who would have diſſuaded the governor from embracing the Chriſtian Religion. We ſee in theſe two perſons, one of whom believed the preaching of St. *Paul*, as the other oppoſed it with all his might, that if the word of God ſaves thoſe who receive it, it will condemn thoſe who are not converted by it; and, that thoſe who withſtand the truth, and turn away others from faith and piety, do draw upon themſelves the ſevereſt judgments of God. St. *Paul*'s diſcourſe in the ſynagogue of *Antioch*, is an abſtract of the Chriſtian doctrine. This apoſtle proves to the *Jews* that *Chriſt* was born of the ſeed of *David*, and that he is the promiſed Meſſiah; which he ſhews by the teſtimony of *John* the Baptiſt, and by the prediction of the prophets. He then declares, that this *Jeſus*, who was crucified at *Jeruſalem*, was raiſed from the dead, in conformity to the prophecies of the Old Teſtament. Laſtly, he teaches them, that the deſign of the coming of *Chriſt* was, to obtain for men the remiſſion of ſins; that accordingly, all ſuch as believed in him ſhould be juſtified; but that thoſe who rejected him ſhould be excluded from ſalvation. Since this is the ſum of the Chriſtian Religion, we ought ſeriouſly and continually to attend to it, and to obſerve, that it is only by faith in *Jeſus Chriſt*, and by obedience to the Goſpel, that we can be ſaved.

ſaved. As for the effect of St. *Paul*'s diſcourſe, we ſee that ſeveral believed his preaching; but that moſt of the *Jews* continued obſtinately in their unbelief, which was the reaſon why this apoſtle told them, that he would turn to the Gentiles. This ſhews what different effects the preaching of the Goſpel produces; that ſome grow better by it, others reject it, and, inſtead of yielding to truth, haughtily oppoſe it. But if there are unbelievers, who continue in their blindneſs, which leads them to deſtruction, they are themſelves the only cauſe of it, ſince none are excluded from everlaſting life, but thoſe who judge themſelves unworthy of it.

CHAP. XIV.

I. ST. *Paul* and St. *Barnabas* preach at *Iconium*, II. From thence they go to *Lyſtra*, where having healed an impotent man, the inhabitants of that place took them for gods, which gave occaſion to St. *Paul* to exhort them to renounce idolatry. III. Soon after, this apoſtle was ſtoned by the people of the town, whom the *Jews* had ſtirred up againſt him; but God having ſaved his life, he went to other places, and then returned to *Antioch*.

REFLECTIONS.

WE find here in general, that the apoſtles exerciſed their miniſtry with great zeal, and in the midſt of perſecutions; and that St. *Paul* in particular felt every where the rage of the *Jews*, ſince he was in danger of being ſtoned with *Barnabas* at *Iconium*, and afterwards was actually ſtoned at *Lyſtra*, and even left for dead. We likewiſe find that God preſerved the apoſtles in the dangers to which they were continually expoſed; that he wrought great miracles by them; and that, if they were diſpleaſed with the great oppoſition they met with from the *Jews*, they had the comfort of bringing ſeveral Gentiles to the faith. II. The zeal St. *Paul* ſhewed when the inhabitants

of *Lyſtra* took him and *Barnabas* for gods, and would have paid them divine honours, is very remarkable. Thoſe who fear God, and have a true zeal, never ſeek their own glory; their great aim ſhould be to glorify God alone, and to cauſe others to know and worſhip him. III. St. *Paul*'s diſcourſe to the *Lyconians*, who were idolators, ſhews, that God did at all times reveal himſelf to mankind, by the works of Nature and Providence, and has always given them proofs of his goodneſs. Upon which we ought to conſider, that if the bleſſings God beſtows upon men in a natural ſtate, ſhould engage them to love and ſerve him, we are much more obliged ſo to do; we, I ſay, to whom he has revealed himſelf by the Goſpel and to whom he has given ſuch ſtrong proofs of his love, by ſending his Son *Jeſus Chriſt* into the world. Laſtly, St. *Luke* takes notice, towards the end of this chapter, of the care which the apoſtles took to go to ſeveral places, that they might exhort the faithful, and chiefly ſettle paſtors in every church, which ſhews the need Chriſtians have of inſtructions and exhortations; and, particularly, the neceſſity of paſtors and teachers; and that the will of God is, that there ſhould be every where among Chriſtians, miniſters to teach, to exhort, and to govern the church.

CHAP. XV.

I. A Diſpute being raiſed in the church of *Antioch*, becauſe ſome *Jews*, who had been converted to Chriſtianity, inſiſted that the Gentiles who embraced the ſame faith, ought to be circumciſed as the *Jews*, and obſerve the ceremonies of the law of *Moſes*, St. *Paul* and St. *Barnabas* were ſent to *Jeruſalem* to conſult the apoſtles upon this queſtion. II. The apoſtles being met together, declared that the Gentiles were not obliged to obſerve circumciſion and the legal ceremonies, but that it would be ſufficient for them to believe in *Chriſt Jeſus* and to obey the Goſpel, and to abſtain from thoſe things which might occaſion

occaſion them to fall into idolatry. And this is what the apoſtles communicated to the church of *Antioch*, in a letter which they ſent by St. *Paul* and St. *Barnabas*. III. After which, thoſe two apoſtles departed from thence to other places, to preach the Goſpel.

REFLECTIONS.

WE have here a very plain explication of the doctrine of juſtification; and what is here ſaid ſerves to clear other places of the New Teſtament, which treat of this doctrine; on which account this chapter deſerves a particular attention: It muſt be obſerved here, that the queſtion propoſed was not to know whether the Gentiles, in order to ſalvation, were obliged to keep the commandments of *Chriſt*, and to do good works; no one then doubted of this truth, nor was there any diſpute about it. But the queſtion was, whether they were obliged to ſubmit to circumciſion and the reſt of the ceremonies of the law of *Moſes*, as certain *Jews* converted to Chriſtianity pretended? It muſt be next remembered, that the apoſtles determined two things upon this queſtion: The firſt, that the converted Gentiles ought not to be obliged to circumciſion, and the practice of the *Jewiſh* ceremonies; but that it was ſufficient to ſalvation, that they ſhould ſincerely believe in *Chriſt*. This the apoſtles proved, 1. Becauſe God had poured his ſpirit upon the Gentiles as well as *Jews*, and had given them faith: And, 2. From the very nature of the *Moſaical* ceremonies, as well as by the predictions of the prophets. This is alſo the doctrine which St. *Paul* lays down in his Epiſtles, where he teaches, that *we are juſtified by faith alone in Jeſus Chriſt, without the works of the law*. The ſecond thing which the apoſtles declared was, that the Gentiles "ſhould abſtain, however, from what had been ſacri-"ficed to idols, from things ſtrangled, and from "blood, and from fornication." The reaſon of this prohibition was, becauſe the uſe of theſe things, as well

well as fornication, were part of the idolatrous worſhip of the Gentiles; and that therefore, if Chriſtians did not abſtain from theſe things, it might have drawn them into idolatry, and confirmed the Gentiles in their falſe religion. It appears from hence, that the apoſtles have not excuſed men from the obſervation of the moral law, but that they have only diſpenſed with the ceremonial law; and that, on the contrary, in teaching that we are juſtified by faith, they eſtabliſh the neceſſity of good works, ſince faith cannot be ſincere if it does not produce good works, and obedience to the Goſpel. By the ſeparation of St. *Barnabas* from St. *Paul*, mentioned at the end of this chapter, we find that theſe two excellent ſervants of God were of different opinions in ſome things; but this difference did not diſunite them, nor hinder them from labouring inceſſantly in advancing the kingdom of *Chriſt*.

CHAP. XVI.

ST. *Paul* calls *Timothy*, to the miniſtry; and, after having been in divers places, he arrives at *Philippi*, a city of *Macedonia*, where he preaches the Goſpel, and where a woman named *Lydia* was converted to the Chriſtian Faith. While St. *Paul* was at *Philippi*, a tumult was raiſed againſt him, becauſe he had delivered a maid-ſervant that was poſſeſſed with an evil ſpirit. He and *Silas* were both ſcourged and caſt into priſon, but being wonderfully delivered by God, the jailor was converted to Chriſtianity, and the magiſtrates of *Philippi* intreated the apoſtles to depart, excuſing themſelves for their ill treatment of them.

REFLECTIONS.

THERE are two things to be obſerved in the calling *Timothy* to the holy miniſtry. The firſt is, that *Timothy*, who was ſo excellent a ſervant of God, had been educated in piety; and that though he was young, every body gave him a good character; by which we ſee that

that none ſhould be admitted to the miniſtry, but perſons that fear God from their youth, and have the teſtimony of a holy life. The ſecond, that St. *Paul*, who condemned circumciſion, when impoſed on the Gentiles as a neceſſary duty, did, notwithſtanding, circumciſe *Timothy*, leſt the *Jews* ſhould reject his miniſtry, under pretence that his father was a Gentile. This is an example of prudence, condeſcenſion, and charity, by which we are taught, that in indifferent matters we muſt ſubmit as much as poſſible to the weak, avoid every thing that may give offence, and regard what may moſt contribute to the peace and edification of the church. II. St. *Luke* ſays, that the ſpirit did not ſuffer St. *Paul* to go to *Aſia*, and that he was warned by a viſion to preach the Goſpel in *Macedonia*; upon which we are to obſerve, that it was God who guided the apoſtles to the places where they could do moſt good, and where their preſence was moſt neceſſary. God does not always think fit that the Goſpel ſhould be preached in all places, but reveals it to ſome rather than to others, for wiſe, for juſt, and good reaſons. III. St. *Luke* tells us, that there was a woman called *Lydia*, who heard St. *Paul*, and that God opened her heart to attend unto the things that were ſpoken by the apoſtles. This ſhews us, that faith is produced by hearing the word of God, and by the efficacy of his grace, which opens the heart, and diſpoſes it for the reception of the truth. IV. St. *Paul* having delivered a maid-ſervant that was poſſeſſed with an evil ſpirit, her maſters, inſtead of being affected with the miracle, perceiving they had loſt the profit ſhe brought them by divination, ſtirred up the magiſtrates againſt the apoſtle. This ſhews how great power there is in ſelf-intereſt, to excite the paſſions of men, and to hinder them from knowing and receiving the truth. St. *Paul* and *Silas*, being ſcourged and impriſoned by order of the magiſtrates of *Philippi*, ſhewed a wonderful conſtancy in the pains and indignities they endured, ſinging praiſes to God in the priſon. Thus Chriſtians receive, not only with patience,

patience, but likewiſe with joy, the evils they are expoſed to for the ſake of *Chriſt*. God opened the doors of the priſon by an earthquake, and the apoſtles had the happineſs of converting the jailor. This is a remarkable inſtance of God's protecting his faithful ſervants; and ſhews, that all that was done againſt the apoſtles turned to the glory of God, to the propagation of the Goſpel, and their greateſt comfort. Laſtly, obſerve, that St. *Paul* pleaded that he was a citizen of *Rome*, to oblige the magiſtrates of *Philippi* to own their fault in cauſing him and *Silas* to be ſcourged and impriſoned without any form of juſtice. This he did to ſhew his innocency, and for the honour of the Goſpel which he preached. It appears plain enough, that St. *Paul* did not, however, ſay this for fear of ſufferings, ſince if he had declared at firſt that he was a citizen of *Rome*, he might have avoided both the ſcourging and impriſonment. Thus we ſee, that he joined great prudence to an admirable patience and a profound humility.

CHAP. XVII.

I. ST. *Paul* and *Silas* preached the Goſpel with ſucceſs at *Theſſalonica*; but the *Jews* having ſtirred up the magiſtrates and people of that city againſt them, they go to *Berea*, and there convert ſeveral perſons. II. But being perſecuted there alſo by the *Jews*, St. *Paul* leaves that town and goes to *Athens*, a famous city of *Greece*. He there preaches the Goſpel, and converts ſeveral perſons.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE arrival of St. *Paul* and *Silas* at *Theſſalonica*, and at *Berea*, their preaching in thoſe two cities, and the tumult which the *Jews* raiſed againſt them, ſhews that St. *Paul* fainted not; that the *Jews* were the moſt bitter enemies of the Goſpel, perſecuting it in every place; but that they had likewiſe the comfort of gaining every where ſouls to *Chriſt*. II. What is ſaid

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in praiſe of the faithful at *Berea*, who chearfully received the word of God, and examined the Scriptures, to ſee whether what St. *Paul* preached to them was agreeable thereto, teaches us to receive the truth with docility and readineſs, and at the ſame time with knowledge and diſcernment; and that every Chriſtian has a right to examine, by the word of God, the doctrine that is preached to him, that he may receive nothing that is not conformable to that divine word, which is the only rule of our faith, and ſubmit obediently to every thing agreeable to it. III. We obſerve in this chapter, the great zeal of St. *Paul*. Grieved to ſee the city of *Athens* over-run with idolatry, he reſolved to preach the Goſpel there; and being intreated by ſome philoſophers to inform them of the doctrine he taught, did not ſcruple to diſcourſe to them concerning the true religion. In imitation of this apoſtle, we ought to be ſincerely concerned when we ſee men engaged in ſin and error, and to lay hold of all occaſions that offer to deliver them from it. We obſerve in the diſcourſe St. *Paul* made to the *Athenians*, on one hand, the wiſdom and prudence of this apoſtle, who took occaſion, even from their ſuperſtitions, to ſpeak to them of the true God; and, on the other, the evidence and force with which he proved, by the cleareſt and ſtrongeſt arguments, and by the teſtimony of their own poets, that there is but one God, almighty and all-gracious, who has created all things; and that it is an extreme folly, and the greateſt of errors, to worſhip idols of gold, ſilver, or ſtone, as did the Gentiles. The diſcourſe of St. *Paul*, contains the principal truths of religion; that there is but one only God, creator and preſerver of the world; that this God is not far from every one of us; that he does not ſtand in need of our ſervice, or any thing elſe from us, ſince it is he that gives us all life, motion, and being. But, above all, we ought to atttend to theſe words, which are the abſtract of the doctrine and duties of the Goſpel, that *God now commandeth all men every where to repent; becauſe he hath appointed*

appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteouſneſs, by that man whom he hath ordained. Theſe truths, which St. *Paul* once taught in an idolatrous city, are the truths which we profeſs to believe; but can be of no ſervice to us, any farther than they ſtir us up to ſerve God, to fear him, to love him, and to obey the Goſpel. We ſee, laſtly, that this diſcourſe of St. *Paul* was attended with the converſion of ſome perſons, but that the greateſt part of thoſe who heard him continued in unbelief. Thus the preaching of the word of God converts ſome, whilſt others ſcoff at and reject it.

CHAP. XVIII.

I. ST. *Paul* dwells at *Corinth* a year and a half, where he converts a great number of people, and is accuſed by the *Jews* before the magiſtrates. II. From thence he goes to *Epheſus*, to *Jeruſalem*, to *Antioch*, and other places, to viſit the churches, and to confirm them in the faith. III. There is mention made at the end of this chapter of *Apollos*, who was a miniſter of the Goſpel, famous for his zeal, and his great talents.

REFLECTIONS.

I. IN what St. *Luke* relates of the ſtay of St. *Paul* made at *Corinth*, we may obſerve the zeal wherewith this apoſtle laboured every where for the advancement of the kingdom of *Chriſt*; and his diſintereſtedneſs and prudence, which appear in his chooſing rather to work with his own hands for his ſubſiſtence, than to be maintained at the charge of the church: the troubles he met with from the *Jews*; and laſtly, the divine protection in his afflictions; and the comfort he had in converting a great number of people in that city, and of founding there a very noble church. Thus the Chriſtian Religion was more and more eſtabliſhed by the preaching of the apoſtles, and in ſpite of all oppoſition of the *Jews*, and of other enemies of the truth.

truth. II. The ſeveral journies and voyages of St. *Paul*, related in this chapter, ſhew that he was continually employed in the duties of his callling, and that he laboured with indefatigable application in the edification of the churches. Thus all true and ſincere Chriſtians, but particularly the faithful miniſters of *Chriſt Jeſus*, exert all their ſtrength, dedicate all their time, yea, their whole lives, to promoting the glory of God, and the ſalvation of men. III. What is here ſaid to the honour of *Apollos*, of his zeal and eloquence, and his other great gifts, and of the extraordinary effects of his miniſtry, ſhould make us acknowledge, that God grants a moſt valuable bleſſing to the church, when he ſends zealous teachers and miniſters, and well ſkilled in the Holy Scriptures, and endowed with the neceſſary talents and gifts for inſtruction and edification; and it ought likewiſe to engage us to beſeech God, that he would always raiſe up ſuch men.

CHAP. XIX.

I. ST. *Paul* preaches the Goſpel in the city of *Epheſus*, and does ſeveral miracles there. II. Certain *Jews*, attempting to caſt out evil ſpirits in the name of *Jeſus*, are ill treated by thoſe who were poſſeſſed. III. Several perſons addicted to magick were converted, and gave publick tokens of their repentance. IV. St. *Luke* adds an account of the tumult raiſed againſt St. *Paul*, by a ſilverſmith, named *Demetrius*, who made great advantage by ſelling little ſilver ſhrines, formed after the model of a famous temple which was in the city, and which was devoted to a goddeſs of the heathens, named *Diana*. That man, finding that St. *Paul*, by preaching againſt idols, made him loſe all his profit, ſtirred up the people againſt him, but the riot was appeaſed by the clerk of the city.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter is a continuation of the wonderful ſucceſs of St. *Paul*'s miniſtry. That apoſtle baptized

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at *Epheſus* certain diſciples, who, till then, had only been inſtructed in the doctrine of *John* the Baptiſt; but as ſoon as they were baptized in the name of *Jeſus Chriſt*, and St. *Paul* had laid his hands on them, they received the miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghoſt. Beſides theſe, he converted there a great number of perſons, in ſpite of the oppoſition of the *Jews*; he here wrought ſurprizing miracles; and ſeveral people that practiſed the magick art, renounced their ſuperſtition, and their impiety. Thus did this apoſtle every where advance the kingdom of *Chriſt*, and deſtroy that of the devil. What happened to the *Jewiſh* exorciſts, who endeavouring to caſt out devils in the name of *Jeſus*, were ill treated by thoſe who were poſſeſſed by the evil ſpirits, tended to convince the *Jews*, and all the world, that none but the apoſtles, and ſuch as believed in *Chriſt*, were really able to work miracles, and had power over the unclean ſpirits; the divine efficacy of the name of *Jeſus*, and the excellence of his religion is diſplayed only by good men; but it does not belong to wicked men, or to hypocrites, to take the name of the Lord in their mouths. St. *Luke* informs us, that ſeveral people living at *Epheſus*, converted by St. *Paul*'s preaching, came and confeſſed their ſins, among whom there were ſome, who having practiſed magick, and unlawful arts, choſe rather publickly, to burn their books treating upon thoſe ſubjects, than to ſell them, though they would have brought them in conſiderable ſums. This example is remarkable; it teaches us, that thoſe who are truly penitent, do not ſcruple to own their faults, to give publick tokens of their repentance, and to renounce all that has been to themſelves, or might be to others, an occaſion of ſin and ſcandal, though it be never ſo precious, or dear and profitable to them. What is principally to be obſerved concerning the ſedition which was raiſed at *Epheſus* againſt St. *Paul*, is, That it was raiſed by ſome crafts-men, who feared that if the people left off worſhipping idols, their trade would loſe its credit, and their gain be diminiſhed; and to

ſtir

ſtir up the people, they pretended a regard to religion, and a zeal for the goddeſs *Diana*. Nothing acts with greater force upon the minds of men than the love of money; nothing raiſes their paſſions ſo much; they cannot bear the truth, when it is contrary to their intereſt; and when they can do it, they conceal their intereſt under the maſk of religion. This great tumult was at laſt, with ſome difficulty, appeaſed by the town-clerk, and St. *Paul* by this means delivered from the danger that threatened him. By which we ſee that tumults and ſeditions are very dangerous, and therefore we ought to avoid every thing that tends to promote them; and that wiſe men are bound to prevent and to calm them by all poſſible means.

CHAP. XX.

I. ST. *Paul* leaves *Epheſus*, and goes to *Troas*, where he preaches the Goſpel to the Chriſtians of that city, and raiſes one from the dead. II. From thence he goes to *Miletus*, where having ſent for the paſtors of the church of *Epheſus*, he gives them a very ſerious exhortation; and then takes his leave of them.

REFLECTIONS.

WE are to obſerve in this chapter, I. Firſt, That St. *Paul* arriving at *Troas*, went to the place where the Chriſtians of that city were met together on the firſt day of the week to break bread, that is to ſay, to celebrate the Lord's Supper, and preached to them very late in the night. From thence we may gather, that the apoſtles, and firſt Chriſtians aſſembled themſelves to ſerve God, and for mutual edification; that Sunday was ſet apart for that purpoſe; that the holy Sacrament was adminiſtered in thoſe meetings, and diſcourſes made for the inſtruction and exhortation of the faithful; and conſequently, that theſe practices are as old as Chriſtianity itſelf and of divine inſtitution. II. The ſecond thing which deſerves our attention, is, that St. *Paul* reſtored a young man to life, who fell from

from the upper room of the houſe where the believers were gathered together. This was a miracle very remarkable, which, without doubt, comforted the Chriſtians of *Troas*, and ſtrengthened them in the religion of *Chriſt*. But what moſt of all deſerves to be conſidered in this chapter is, the diſcourſe which St. *Paul* made to the paſtors of *Epheſus*, before he left them: in which we ſee with how great integrity, zeal, and diſintereſtedneſs he diſcharged his miniſtry; his conſtancy under afflictions, his great piety, the care he took to exhort and teach for three years together, both in publick, and from houſe to houſe; his ſettled reſolution of ſerving the Lord faithfully, even to the end, and even of ſacrificing his life with joy, for the ſake of the Goſpel. We ſee there alſo, the grave and affecting exhortations which he made to the miniſters of *Epheſus*, and the ardent and tender wiſhes by which he recommends them to God, and the whole church over which they were appointed. From thence the miniſters of the Goſpel may learn faithfully to diſcharge their office, and to fulfil the duties of it with diligence, zeal, and ſincerity; to watch carefully over the Lord's flock, and to take heed that no falſe or offenſive doctrines ſlide in among them; never to conceal any thing that may be of uſe to thoſe who are committed to their truſt; to warn them, not only publickly, but privately alſo; to ſuffer patiently the troubles to which they are expoſed; to pray continually for their flocks; and laſtly, to have no regard nor value for themſelves, their own intereſts, nor even their lives, provided they may have the ſatisfaction of finiſhing their courſe, and faithfully diſcharging the miniſtry which they have received from the Lord *Jeſus*. What St. *Paul* ſays on this occaſion teaches Chriſtians, that the office of paſtor is of the greateſt importance; that God is very gracious to us when he ſends us faithful miniſters; and that when they have warned and inſtructed us with fidelity, they will not be anſwerable for our ſouls if we do not do our duty. The tears which the paſtors and Chriſtians of *Epheſus* ſhed

ſhed at parting with St. *Paul*, prove how dearly they loved him; and is likewiſe an argument how ſtrong that love ought to be that unites the paſtors to their flocks, and how much Chriſtians ſhould dread to be deprived of the miniſtry of the faithful ſervants of God.

CHAP. XXI.

ST. *Paul* departing from *Miletus* arrives at *Tyre*, and from thence goes to *Ceſarea*, where he is warned by a prophet that he ſhould be impriſoned at *Jeruſalem*, and delivered over to the Gentiles. This prediction did not affright St. *Paul*, who declared, that he neither feared bonds nor even death; and ſo he ſet forwards for *Jeruſalem*. When he was arrived there, he entered into the temple with four other perſons, who had a vow upon them, to obſerve what was ordered by the law of *Moſes* in the like caſe. Though he did this by the advice of the other apoſtles, to ſhew that he was not an enemy to the law, as he had been accuſed, the *Jews* did nevertheleſs raiſe a tumult againſt him, and would have put him to death, if the captain of thoſe that guarded the temple had not reſcued him out of their hands.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE prediction of *Agabus*, who warned St. *Paul* that he ſhould be caſt into priſon at *Jeruſalem*, ſhews, that nothing befel that apoſtle, but by the ſpecial will of God; and that it was the Lord who expoſed him to thoſe perſecutions, and who thought fit that he ſhould be delivered to the Gentiles, and afterwards carried to *Rome*, that he might bear witneſs to the Goſpel every where. The noble reſolution and conſtancy which St. *Paul* expreſſed, when the diſciples beſought him with tears not to go up to *Jeruſalem*, declaring that he was ready, not only to be bound but to ſuffer death for the name of the Lord *Jeſus*, ſhews, that this faithful ſervant of God was entirely

devoted to *Chriſt*, and that nothing was capable of ſhaking his conſtancy. This is an example that ought to be imitated by all Chriſtians, but particularly by the miniſters of the Goſpel: And, as the Chriſtians of *Ceſarea*, when they ſaw St. *Paul* was determined to go, no longer oppoſed his journey, but reſigned to the will of God; we ought alſo to ſubmit to what God has determined, and to ſacrifice our deareſt inclinations to his will, as ſoon as it is manifeſted to us. What St. *Paul* did, when he went to the temple of *Jeruſalem*, and purified himſelf according to the cuſtom of the *Jews*, muſt be looked upon as an act of prudence and charity; and which tended to prove, that he was unjuſtly accuſed of being an enemy to the law of *Moſes*. This prudent behaviour of St. *Paul*, teaches us to accommodate ourſelves as much as we can, and to comply in indifferent matters with thoſe who are prejudiced againſt us, and to neglect nothing to bring them off from their wrong notions. We find, however, that notwithſtanding what St. *Paul* did to comply with the *Jews*, they roſe up againſt him to take away his life. Theſe are the common effects of paſſion and prejudice: they ſo blind men, that nothing can undeceive them. Laſtly, It is to be obſerved, that Providence delivered St. *Paul* from the rage of the *Jews*, by means of the tribune, making uſe of what this apoſtle had done, in compliance with the *Jews*, to cauſe him to be ſeized and delivered by that very people, into the hands of the Gentiles, as had been foretold. Thus God ſecures thoſe that ſerve him, and all that men do againſt them, tends only to accompliſh the ends of Providence.

CHAP. XXII.

I. THIS is a diſcourſe, in which St. *Paul*, to juſtify himſelf from the accuſation of the *Jews*, that he was an enemy to their law and nation, gives the hiſtory of his life and converſion. II. But the *Jews* inſiſting upon his being put to death, the captain ordered

dered he ſhould be examined by ſcourging; which, however, was not done, becauſe this apoſtle declared that he was a citizen of *Rome*; but he was ſent back, that he might appear before the council of the *Jews*.

REFLECTIONS.

THE deſign of St. *Paul*'s diſcourſe, which is here ſet down, was to ſhew the *Jews* he was no enemy to their religion; that, ſo far from it, he himſelf had been very zealous for that religion, in which he was brought up at *Jeruſalem*; and was formerly a moſt violent perſecutor of the Chriſtians; that the reaſon why he had embraced the Chriſtian Religion, and preached it every where, was in obedience to the heavenly call. In this behaviour of St. *Paul* towards the *Jews*, we may obſerve, that he endeavoured both to juſtify himſelf, and to pacify them, but that he did not, however, diſſemble the truth. This teaches us to ſpeak and act always with temper and prudence, eſpecially when we have to do with perſons prejudiced againſt us; and, at the ſame time, with courage and reſolution, without diſguiſe, and without diſſembling the truth through fear. The rage the *Jews* were in when St. *Paul* ſaid, that the Lord had ſent him to the Gentiles, ſhews, that the chief cauſe of their hatred againſt this apoſtle, was the averſion they had to the heathens. This procedure of the *Jews* ſhews, likewiſe, that nothing can undeceive people who labour under ſtrong prejudices. Laſtly, St. *Paul*, when they were going to examine him by ſcourging, thought fit, in order to avoid it at this time, to plead his privilege as a citizen of *Rome*, which he had neglected to do on another occaſion. He acted thus, becauſe it was a lawful means of ſecuring himſelf againſt their violent and unjuſt treatment. From whence we may conclude, that it is lawful to make uſe of our right, and to employ all juſt and reaſonable methods to defend ourſelves, when we are in danger of being oppreſſed, or unjuſtly treated.

CHAP. XXIII.

THIS chapter consists of two parts: I. St. *Paul's* appearing before the council of the *Jews*. II. The relation of a conspiracy, which forty *Jews* had formed to take away this apostle's life, and the manner in which he was preserved.

REFLECTIONS.

WE may make four reflections upon this chapter; I. That St. *Paul*, being unjustly struck, by the order of the high priest *Ananias*, threatened him with the judgment of God; but that he, nevertheless, declared the respect he bore to his character, when he was acquainted, that he who had caused him to be thus struck, was the high priest; which he did not know at first. What we are to learn from hence is, that we ought to speak respectfully of our superiors; and, at the same time, that God will punish unjust judges, and such as abuse their authority. II. That St. *Paul* occasioned a division between the Pharisees and Sadducees, by saying, that he was arraigned for believing the resurrection of the dead. He acted wisely in preventing, by this means, being oppressed by the *Jews*, and shewing that he taught what the Pharisees themselves believed concerning the resurrection. III. That God appeared to St. *Paul* by night, and bid him fear nothing, but to be prepared to go, and bear witness to the truth at *Rome*. This was necessary for the support of the apostle, in the midst of those troubles which the *Jews* raised against him, to instruct him in the designs of Providence, and to encourage him to make every where an open profession of the truth. IV. We see, in the last place, that forty *Jews* having conspired to slay St. *Paul*, he was preserved from that danger by a young man, his nephew, who gave the captain notice of it. We may observe from this, how great the rage of the *Jews* was against St. *Paul*; to what excesses hatred, joined with a false zeal for religion,

gion, is capable of hurrying men, and how dangerous it is to be hurried away by paſſion, and to make raſh vows. Finally, we ſhould admire, in this event, the means that Providence uſes to preſerve innocent and good men from impending dangers.

CHAP. XXIV.

I. ST. *Paul* being accuſed by the *Jews* before the governor *Felix*, gives an account of his behaviour and his faith. II. *Felix* deſiring to hear St. *Paul*, that apoſtle diſcourſed of the duties of juſtice, of temperance, and of the laſt judgment, in ſuch a manner as filled him with terror. However, St. *Paul* remained a priſoner at *Ceſarea*, for the ſpace of two years.

REFLECTIONS.

I. WHAT we are to conſider firſt upon this chapter, is, that St. *Paul* being very unjuſtly accuſed by the *Jews*, before the governor *Felix*, defended himſelf in a grave, ſolid diſcourſe; in which, whilſt he juſtifies himſelf from the accuſations brought againſt him, and denies thoſe things which the *Jews* falſely laid to his charge, he does, nevertheleſs, make an open confeſſion of the faith and doctrine which he taught. We may learn from this inſtance of ſincerity and zeal, that neither fear, nor any other conſideration, ought to hinder us from aſſerting the truth. II. It is obſervable, that the apoſtle, giving an account of his faith and behaviour, declares he believed and taught nothing but what was written in the law and the prophets, and particularly the reſurrection of the dead, of the juſt and of the unjuſt. By what St. *Paul* ſays on this ſubject, we ſee, that the doctrine of the reſurrection is a very important part of the Chriſtian Religion; and, that thoſe who profeſs to believe it, ought to live a holy and unblameable life, having a conſcience void of offence towards God, and towards men. We ſhould, in the laſt place, ſeriouſly take notice of the terror with which *Felix* was ſeized, when St. *Paul* talked to

him about righteouſneſs, temperance, and the laſt judgment; of that governor's obduracy, who finding his own conſcience reproach him with injuſtice, impurity, and ſeveral other crimes, would not ſuffer the apoſtle to proceed. Here we ſee the power of the word of God, and the effects which the truth of the Goſpel, and eſpecially the doctrine of the univerſal judgment, produce, even upon the minds of the wicked. But we likewiſe obſerve, how ſinners reſiſt that word, and the motions of their own conſcience. This ſhould therefore be a warning to us, not to harden our hearts, nor ever to delay our converſion, when God cauſes us to hear his voice, and when we feel ourſelves affected with it. The wickedneſs of *Felix* appeared yet farther, in his leaving St. *Paul* impriſoned two years, not that he thought him guilty, but becauſe he was covetous, and hoped to extort money from him. Thus avarice, and reſpect for men, are the cauſe of great injuſtice, and hinder men from attaining the knowledge of the truth.

CHAP. XXV.

I. THE *Jews* deſire *Feſtus*, who ſucceeded *Felix* in the government of *Judea*, to ſend St. *Paul* from *Ceſarea*, where he had been a priſoner two years, to *Jeruſalem*, having formed a deſign to kill him on the way: but *Feſtus* did not grant them their requeſt, telling them they might come to *Ceſarea*, which they did. Upon this, St. *Paul* appealed to the emperor, and *Feſtus* reſolved to ſend him to *Rome*. II. About this time king *Agrippa* coming to *Ceſarea*, and being told of St. *Paul*, was deſirous to ſee and hear him.

REFLECTIONS.

THE reflections to be made on this chapter are, I. That the *Jews* having treacherouſly contrived to kill St. *Paul*, God did not ſuffer them to execute their wicked and cruel deſign, which ſhould lead us to acknowledge the protection which God affords his faithful

ful ſervants. II. That St. *Paul* being accuſed by the *Jews*, before *Feſtus*, continued to maintain his innocence, and at laſt deſired his cauſe might be referred to the emperor. This procedure of the apoſtle ſhews, that when we are unjuſtly accuſed, we may have recourſe to courts of juſtice, and make uſe of all the lawful means for our defence which Providence puts in our power. III. It muſt be likewiſe conſidered, that Providence did thus diſpoſe matters, not only that St. *Paul* might not fall into the hands of the *Jews* but alſo that he might thereby have an opportunity of going to *Rome*, and of preaching the Goſpel in that great city, as our Lord had foretold he ſhould. IV. The behaviour of *Feſtus* towards St. *Paul*, ſhews, that that governor, though a heathen, had more integrity and equity than the *Jews*, and even than the high prieſts, and magiſtrates of *Jeruſalem* themſelves. Laſtly, It is to be obſerved, that king *Agrippa* coming at that time to *Ceſarea*, was deſirous to ſee and hear St. *Paul*, and that this was an occaſion with which Providence furniſhed this apoſtle to ſpeak in the preſence of that prince, and a great number of people of the firſt rank: which turned to the juſtification of St. *Paul*, and the doctrine he preached, as we ſee in the following chapter.

CHAP. XXVI.

I. ST. *Paul* ſpeaking in the preſence of king *Agrippa*, of *Bernice*, of the governor *Feſtus*, and a great number of officers, and people of diſtinction, gives the hiſtory of his life, converſion, and manner of exerciſing his miniſtry to that time. II. He was interrupted by *Feſtus*, who took him for a madman, and by king *Agrippa*, who was moved by his diſcourſe. III. Finally, this prince, the governor, and all that were preſent, acknowledged the innocence of *St. Paul*; but it was reſolved that he ſhould be ſent to *Rome*, becauſe he had appealed to the emperor.

REFLECTIONS.

I. IN the diſcourſe St. *Paul* made before king *Agrippa*, to give an account of his conduct, both before and after his converſion, we diſcover a character of wiſdom, of moderation, and, at the ſame time, of ingenuity, ſteadineſs, and courage, which very plainly denote the innocence and zeal of this apoſtle. The mild and reſpectful, but, at the ſame time, frank and ſincere manner, in which he ſpoke upon this occaſion, ſhould teach us to anſwer always as we are exhorted by St. *Peter*, with meekneſs and humility, thoſe who require an account of our faith, and of the hope which is in us, and never to conceal nor diſſemble the truth. II We are to conſider upon this diſcourſe, that if St. *Paul* perſecuted the church before his converſion, he did it in ignorance and unbelief, but that, otherwiſe, his life was irreproachable; and, that after the Lord had called him, he ſerved him with great zeal. What we are to learn from hence, is, that ſins of ignorance are more eaſily pardoned than others, and that we are, likewiſe, more eaſily reclaimed from them; that God reveals himſelf ſooner or later, to ſuch as are of an upright heart; and that, whenever he calls us, we ought to obey, and follow that call immediately. III. We ſee by the judgment *Feſtus* made of St. *Paul*, taking him for a mad-man, that the moſt ſerious things ſeem folly to the worldly-minded; and the wiſe and reſpectful anſwer which St. *Paul* returned to *Feſtus*, is a noble inſtance of moderation and courage. IV. St. *Luke* mentions a very remarkable circumſtance; that king *Agrippa*, hearing St. *Paul*, ſaid, that he had almoſt perſuaded him to be a Chriſtian; to which the apoſtle replied, that he wiſhed he, and all preſent, were really and truly Chriſtians. Upon which it may be obſerved, that that prince, who profeſſed the *Jewiſh* religion, and believed the prophets, found in the diſcourſe of the apoſtle, a probability, at leaſt, by which we may ſee the force of truth; but the impreſſion was not to ſalvation, ſince *Agrippa* took no care to be

farther

farther inſtructed therein. It is in vain to be but faintly affected with the word of God, or to be a half, an almoſt Chriſtian; we muſt be ſo altogether, and with our whole heart. Laſtly, We find that king *Agrippa* and *Feſtus*, after they had heard St. *Paul*, and examined the accuſation laid againſt him, confeſſed his innocence, and would have acquitted him, if he had not appealed to *Ceſar*. By this means this apoſtle's innocence was vindicated; and, if he was ſent to *Rome*, it was not as a criminal, which would have been a great hindrance to the Goſpel he was to preach in that city. Thus St. *Paul* experienced, on this occaſion, God's peculiar protection; and the Lord fulfilled in him, what he had foretold of the apoſtles, namely, that they ſhould be brought before kings and rulers, to bear witneſs of him; but that he would aſſiſt them with his ſpirit, and put into their mouth what ſhould be neceſſary for them to ſpeak in their defence.

CHAP. XXVII.

THIS chapter contains a relation of the voyage which St. *Paul* made by ſea from *Ceſarea* to *Rome*, where what is chiefly to be obſerved, is, that he was in danger of periſhing, the ſhip in which he was having run a-ground.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS hiſtory preſents us with four remarks: I. The firſt relates to the continual danger St. *Paul* was expoſed to. After having eſcaped the rage of the *Jews*, he had like to have been caſt away in his voyage to *Rome*, and beſides, to be murdered by the ſoldiers. II. The ſecond is, that God, who had protected him till then, was pleaſed to deliver him from both theſe dangers. We ſee, therefore, that nothing can hurt thoſe whom God favours with his protection, and who ſerve him faithfully. III. The third, that God did not only ſave the life of St. *Paul*, but for his ſake, preſerved

preſerved all thoſe that were in the ſhip with him; ſo that when they were ſhipwrecked, there was not one loſt. This wonderful deliverance, which St. *Paul* foretold, muſt needs convince them, that this apoſtle was a true ſervant of God; and it is a leſſon to us, that it is always a great happineſs to be in the company of good men; and that, upon their account, God often ſpares the reſt, granting them deliverance, and ſhewing them great favour. IV. It is to be obſerved, in the laſt place, that though God had aſſured St *Paul* by an angel, that none of thoſe who were in the ſhip with him ſhould periſh, yet that apoſtle declared, that if the mariners did not remain in the veſſel, they could not be ſaved. The promiſes which God makes us, ſhould not hinder us from uſing thoſe means that prudence directs, and which he himſelf has eſtabliſhed; wherefore our reliance upon God ought never to be attended with raſhneſs or negligence.

CHAP. XXVIII.

1 ST. *Paul* having been ſhipwrecked upon the coaſt of the iſle of *Maltha*, ſtaid there three months, and wrought ſundry miracles. II. He departs from *Maltha*, and arrives at *Rome*.

REFLECTIONS.

THE humanity with which the inhabitants of *Maltha* received St. *Paul*, and thoſe which were ſhipwrecked with him, ſhould teach Chriſtians to exerciſe hoſpitality, and heartily to aſſiſt thoſe that are in diſtreſs. The judgment which the people of that iſland paſſed upon St. *Paul*, when he was bit by a viper, ſhews, that men, even the moſt rude and uncultivated, have always thought that divine vengeance does not ſuffer crimes to go unpuniſhed, which is a moſt certain truth; however, the example of St. *Paul* proves, that it would be judging raſhly, to imagine that all thoſe whom any misfortune befals, are purſued by the juſtice of God. The opinion which the inhabitants of *Maltha*

Maltha conceived of St. *Paul*, taking him for a god, when they ſaw he was not hurt, muſt be looked upon as an effect of the ignorance of thoſe idolatrous people; but this miracle, as well as that of curing the father-in-law of *Publius*, and other diſtempered perſons of that iſland, oblige us to acknowledge the accompliſhment of that promiſe which *Chriſt* made his apoſtles in the xvith chapter and 18th verſe of the Goſpel of St. *Mark*: *They ſhall take up ſerpents, and if they drink any deadly thing, it ſhall not hurt them; they ſhall lay hands on the ſick, and they ſhall recover.* Laſtly, St. *Paul* being arrived at *Rome*, ſaw not only the Chriſtians that were in that great city, but likewiſe the *Jews*, whom he informed of the reaſons that induced him to take a voyage to *Rome*, and to appeal to the emperor; he ſpoke of their nation, and of the *Jews* at *Jeruſalem*, with great temper, and afterwards endeavoured to bring them to believe in *Jeſus Chriſt*; and finding, at laſt, that ſeveral among them continued in their unbelief, he declared to them, that becauſe of their obdurateneſs, he would preach the Goſpel to the Gentiles. This his behaviour, full of wiſdom and charity, ſhews, that we ought to omit nothing that may edify the world, or bring back thoſe who are prejudiced againſt the truth; and that, if then people will continue obſtinate, they are inexcuſable.

Thus ends the Hiſtory of St. *Luke*, and the Book of the *Acts of the Apoſtles*. It may be farther obſerved, that St. *Paul* remained a priſoner at *Rome* two years; that, during that time, he wrote ſeveral Epiſtles, which have been preſerved in the New Teſtament; that he was afterwards ſet at liberty, and made ſeveral journies; and that, returning to *Rome* about five years after, he there ſuffered martyrdom, being beheaded in the reign of *Nero*.

The End of the ACTS *of the* APOSTLES.

THE

THE

EPISTLE OF ST. PAUL

TO THE

ROMANS.

ARGUMENT.

The Epiſtle to the Romans *was wrote about the fifty-ſeventh year of our Lord. It was placed at the head of the other Epiſtles, becauſe of the importance of the matters contained in it, and the dignity of the city of* Rome. *The deſign of this Epiſtle is to ſhew, that faith in* Chriſt, *through the Goſpel, is the only way of ſalvation; and that circumciſion, and the works of the law of* Moſes, *gave the* Jews *no advantage over the Gentiles; and, therefore, that the Gentiles, who embraced the Goſpel, were not to be obliged to ſubmit to circumciſion, and the ceremonies of the law, as certain* Jews *converted to Chriſtianity pretended; and that God might call the Gentiles, and receive them into his covenant, as the prophets had foretold. This is what we are taught in the eleven firſt chapters of this Epiſtle. In the five laſt, St.* Paul *exhorts the* Romans *to the principal duties of the Chriſtian life, and eſpecially to charity, forbearance, and peace; foraſmuch as the diviſions which prevailed at that time, between the* Jews *and the converted Gentiles, troubled the peace of the church.*

CHAP.

CHAP. I.

IN this chapter St. *Paul* does two things: I. He ſalutes the believers at *Rome*, and expreſſes his joy at hearing of their faith, and the great deſire he had to go and ſee them. II. He begins to ſhew that as all men were ſinners, they could be ſaved only by *Jeſus Chriſt*; and for that purpoſe he makes appear, that though God had diſcovered himſelf to the Gentiles, by the works of the creation, they did not ſerve him, but fell into idolatry, and all kinds of diſorders.

REFLECTIONS.

I. WE obſerve, at the beginning of this Epiſtle, the love of St. *Paul* to the *Romans*, his deſire to contribute to their edification, and his zeal to make known the Goſpel in all places, and to all perſons, and even in the city of *Rome*. All Chriſtians, and particularly miniſters of the Goſpel, ought to imitate St. *Paul* in this reſpect; to love tenderly the church of *Chriſt*, and the faithful; to pray continually for them; to procure their edification with all their might, and never to be aſhamed of truth or godlineſs. II. We ſee, that although God manifeſted himſelf to the Gentiles by the works of creation and providence, they did not glorify him, but abandoned themſelves to ſins of every kind; and that even thoſe nations where arts and ſciences flouriſhed, fell into the moſt ſhameful idolatry, and moſt unworthy of reaſonable creatures, and thereby provoked God's wrath againſt them. If the Gentiles were guilty before God, and inexcuſable for theſe things, as St. *Paul* declares, how guilty ſhould we be, if, after God has made known himſelf to us, not only by the works of nature, but by his word, we did not ſerve him as we ought! III. What the apoſtle ſays in this chapter, with reſpect to the two principal ſins of the Gentiles, which were idolatry, and the dreadful diſorders which they fell into with reſpect to uncleanneſs, ſhews us

what

what condition we ſhould be in, if God had not enlightened us with the light of the Goſpel, and into what horrid actions ſenſuality and uncleanneſs may lead mankind. IV. Finally, in the laſt verſes of this chapter, St. *Paul* deſcribes the vices of the heathen, ſaying, that they were filled with pollutions, covetouſneſs, injuſtice, and paſſions and ſins of every kind; and that although they knew that thoſe who did ſuch things were worthy of death, they did not forbear committing them. We muſt own, to our ſhame, that this is the picture of the lives and manners of a great number of Chriſtians; but it likewiſe teaches us, that they who thus imitate the heathens in their diſorders, who know much better than they the law of God and his will, muſt expect the ſevereſt judgments.

CHAP. II.

I. ST. *Paul* having ſhewn, in the foregoing chapter, that the Gentiles were ſinners, proves in this, that the *Jews*, who condemned the Gentiles, were ſinners alſo; and, by abuſing the light they enjoyed, and the goodneſs of God, they would appear much more guilty before his tribunal than the Gentiles, who knew no other law but that of nature and conſcience. Whence it follows, that the *Jews* could not pretend to be juſtified before God by their works, and that they had no more right to ſalvation than the Gentiles. II. And becauſe the *Jews* gloried in having the law of God, and circumciſion, which was the token of the covenant, the apoſtle declares, that all theſe external advantages, which diſtinguiſhed them from the Gentiles, did not render them more acceptable to God, but were uſeleſs to them whilſt they neglected to keep the law.

REFLECTIONS.

THE deſign of this chapter in general, is to ſhew that the *Jews* were guilty before God, as much, and even more than the Gentiles; and, conſequently, that they

they could not be juſtified nor ſaved but by *Jeſus Chriſt*. Beſides which, we may gather from this chapter the following inſtructions: I. That thoſe who condemn ſin in others, and do, nevertheleſs, commit the like, will be inexcuſable, and ſhall not eſcape the judgment of God. II. That God uſes great forbearance towards ſinners, in order to bring them to repentance; and that thoſe who abuſe ſuch forbearance, draw upon themſelves the moſt terrible effects of his wrath. III. That God will one day render to all men according to their works; that he will give everlaſting life to thoſe who have perſevered in well doing; but that affliction and deſpair will be the portion of the wicked. IV. That, at the day of judgment, men will be judged according to the degree of knowledge which they have had; that the Gentiles will be judged by the law of nature; but, that the puniſhment of thoſe who ſhall ſin againſt the law that God has given them in his word, will be much more rigorous; by which we may ſee what Chriſtians are to expect, who ſin againſt the light of the Goſpel. V. And laſtly, St. *Paul* proves that the *Jews* in vain gloried in being more enlightened than the Gentiles, and having the ſign of circumciſion. He reproaches them with tranſgreſſing the law of God in a more criminal manner than the Gentiles themſelves, and cauſing them to blaſpheme the name of God; whence he concludes, that circumciſion, and other privileges which they enjoyed, were of no uſe to them, and that they would be treated as Gentiles and uncircumciſed. What St. *Paul* ſays with ſo much evidence againſt the *Jews*, teaches us, that we ought not to boaſt of knowing the will of God, of being in covenant with him, and of having the external tokens of his covenant, unleſs we do his will; that he is not a true Chriſtian who is only ſo outwardly; but that he ſhall be eſteemed a Chriſtian, who is ſo inwardly, and in the heart, and who is approved not by men, but by the Lord himſelf.

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

ST. *Paul* ſhews three things in this chapter: I. That the *Jews* had great advantages over the Gentiles; that if they did not believe in *Jeſus Chriſt*, this did not hinder God from being always true in his promiſes, nor them from being juſtly puniſhed; and, that though the unbelief of the *Jews* ſerved to manifeſt the righteouſneſs, truth, and goodneſs of God, yet they would, nevertheleſs, be wholly inexcuſable. II. St. *Paul* proves, by ſeveral texts of the Old Teſtament, that the *Jews* were guilty of the violation of the law of God; and he takes notice, that thoſe texts did only relate to the *Jews*. III. He concludes from thence, that the *Jews* could not have been juſtified by the law of *Moſes*, and that neither they nor the Gentiles could be juſtified any other way than by faith in *Jeſus Chriſt;* and he ſays, that this doctrine was ſo far from being oppoſite to the law, that, on the contrary, it eſtabliſhed it more ſtrongly.

REFLECTIONS.

THE doctrine which St. *Paul* teaches throughout this chapter, and which he deſigns to prove, is, that ſince the *Jews* were involved in ſin and guilt as well as the Gentiles, they could not pretend to be juſtified by the law of *Moſes*, and that there was but one only means of juſtification for both, *viz.* faith in *Jeſus Chriſt*, who has made an atonement for the ſins of all mankind. Beſides this doctrine, which is the foundation and ſum of the whole Chriſtian Religion, there are three particular remarks to be made upon this chapter: I. That as the privileges which the *Jews* enjoyed were of no benefit to them, by reaſon of their unbelief, ſo, likewiſe, the advantages which God has granted to us Chriſtians, will be uſeleſs to us if we abuſe them, and will not ſecure us from his judgment. II. That the infidelity and ingratitude of men, do not make God unrighteous when he puniſhes them; that ſuch infidelity does even help to

ſhew, that God is righteous, good, and true; but that nevertheleſs, we muſt not think that God cannot condemn ſinners with juſtice, becauſe ſin ſerves to manifeſt his glory; for the glory of God is only accidentally the effect of ſin; the aim and deſign of the wicked is not to advance God's glory, but to ſatisfy their paſſions. What the apoſtle ſays upon this occaſion, proves likewiſe, that we muſt never do evil under a pretence that good may follow. III. And laſtly, It appears by the laſt verſes of this chapter, that the intention of St. *Paul*, in what he here teaches, was not to aboliſh the law, or to render it uſeleſs; nor ought we from thence to infer, that Chriſtians are allowed to break the law, and to continue in ſin; but, on the contrary, that the doctrine of juſtification by faith is, at the bottom, the ſame with that of the law and the prophets; and that this doctrine is ſo far from diſpenſing with the duties of holineſs, that it leads men more effectually to the practice of them, as is ſhewn by the apoſtle in the following chapters.

CHAP. IV.

I. THE apoſtle proves, in this chapter, by the example of the Patriarch *Abraham*, that men are juſtified by faith, and not by circumciſion, nor by the works of the law of *Moſes*. Accordingly he obſerves, that juſtification conſiſts in the pardon of ſin, and that *Abraham* himſelf was juſtified by his faith, and that he received the promiſes of God long before he was circumciſed. II. He repreſents, in the next place, what was the virtue and efficacy of *Abraham*'s faith; and concludes, that all who believe in *Jeſus Chriſt* dead, and riſen again, ſhould be juſtified by faith, as *Abraham* was.

REFLECTIONS.

ST. *Paul* teaches us, in this chapter, in the cleareſt manner, what juſtification is, and how we may partake of it. I. He ſhews, that juſtification, and the happineſs of ſinful man, conſiſts in the pardon of ſin, which

which God grants to mankind in his pure mercy; and affirms, that this favour is obtained by faith in *Chriſt*, and not by the works of the law of *Moſes*. This he proves clearly, by obſerving that *Abraham* was juſtified by his faith, and the promiſes were made to his poſterity long before he was circumciſed. From whence it evidently follows, that it was not the circumciſion, but faith, that rendered him acceptable to God; that therefore circumciſion was not neceſſary to ſalvation; and all thoſe who imitate the faith of this patriarch, will be accounted his children and poſterity, and juſtified as he was. But the manner in which the apoſtle ſpeaks of the faith of *Abraham*, and its effects, is an invincible proof, that it is impoſſible to be juſtified, and obtain ſalvation, if our faith be not like that of *Abraham's*, and our faith in God and his promiſes be not efficacious and active, inducing us to expect every thing from him, to hope in his promiſes, and obey him even in the moſt difficult matters, as did this holy patriarch. This is a moſt important doctrine, which we ought to comprehend well, and carefully remember, and which ſhould ſerve for a rule to our thoughts, and to our actions.

CHAP. V.

THIS chapter conſiſts of three parts: I. St. *Paul* deſcribes the fruits of juſtification, and the admirable effects which faith, and a conviction of the love of God, produceth in believers, even in the midſt of afflictions and perſecutions. II. He repreſents the great love of God to men, in giving his Son to die for them. III. He ſhews, that *Chriſt* alone is the fountain of all theſe precious advantages: in which view he compares *Chriſt* with *Adam*, and ſhews, that if *Adam* had ſubjected all men, without exception, to ſin and to death, even thoſe that lived before *Moſes*, and to whom God had not given a poſitive and revealed law, as he did to *Adam*; much more ought we to believe, that the mercy of God

ſhould

ſhould extend to all mankind by *Jeſus Chriſt*: from whence he concludes, that our Lord is the author of ſalvation, and of life, to all ſuch as truly believe in him.

REFLECTIONS.

WE may obſerve, by the reading of this chapter, I. The happy condition of true believers, ſince being juſtified by faith, they are ſo firmly perſuaded, and have ſo agreeable and lively a ſenſe of the love of God, that they rejoice continually in the expectation of the glory of heaven, even in the midſt of the greateſt tribulations. II. We ought ſeriouſly to meditate upon what is here ſaid concerning the great love that God has ſhewn to us ſinful men, by delivering up his Son to die for us, and particularly his love to thoſe that are reconciled to him, and ſincerely believe the Goſpel. This conſideration is a powerful motive to gratitude, full of comfort to believers, and very proper to confirm them in his love. III. The compariſon St. *Paul* makes in this chapter between *Adam* and *CHRIST*, tends to ſhew, that our Lord came to deliver man from ſin and death, to which they all became ſubject by the fall of *Adam*. This ought to make us look upon *Chriſt*, as him in whom we find a deliverance from all our evils, and who is the giver of ſpiritual and eternal life to all ſuch as believe in him, and obey him. But it likewiſe appears from hence, that none but thoſe who have a ſhare in the righteouſneſs and life of *Chriſt*, can obtain ſalvation; and that ſuch as do not receive him with a true faith, and who imitate *Adam* in his diſobedience, remain in condemnation and in death.

CHAP. VI.

THE deſign of St. *Paul* in this chapter is to ſhew, I. That the doctrine of juſtification by faith in *Jeſus Chriſt*, and of the abundant grace of God to the greateſt ſinners, which he has taught in the fore-

going chapters, does by no means authorize Chriſtians to live in ſin, but, on the contrary, does powerfully draw them from it; and that baptiſm engages them to live a holy life. II. He ſhews in the ſame view, that we ought to be ſo far from ſinning, upon a pretence that we are no longer under the law, but under grace, that it is grace which delivers us from the ſlavery and bondage of ſin, to make us the ſervants of God, that is, to dedicate ourſelves wholly to his ſervice.

REFLECTIONS.

WE ought ſeriouſly to meditate on the doctrine St. *Paul* here teaches us; it amounts to this: I. That we ſhould not think, that becauſe the grace of God is offered to men of corrupt lives, we are allowed to live in ſin. II. That, far from it, the baptiſm which we have received, and the belief in *Chriſt*'s death and reſurrection, oblige us in the ſtrongeſt manner to renounce ſin, and to lead a ſpiritual life, in imitation of that of our Saviour. III. That it would be a thing highly unworthy of our calling, and of the condition of Chriſtians, if ſin ſhould reign in us, and if we ſhould ſuffer ourſelves to be carried away by the inordinate deſires of the fleſh; but that we ought much rather to cleave to God, live only for him, and employ our bodies and ſouls in his ſervice, and to his glory. IV. That it would be an abuſe of the doctrine of grace, and a great affront to *Chriſt* and his Goſpel, to fancy that we may ſin without fear, upon a pretence that we are no longer under the law, but under grace; that, on the contrary, the effect which grace ought to produce, and the deſign for which it is given us, is to releaſe us from the ſhameful bondage of ſin, and to make us ſubmit ourſelves to God and his righteouſneſs, and cauſe us to bring forth the fruits of ſanctification, to the end that we may obtain everlaſting life. Theſe are truths of very great weight, and the chapter in which they are contained ought to be read and meditated carefully on.

CHAP.

CHAP. VII.

THE apoſtle having taught in the preceding chapter, that we muſt not think that Chriſtians are allowed to live in ſin, on pretence that they are not under the law, but under grace, confirms the ſaid doctrine in this chapter, and ſhews, I. That as a woman is at liberty to marry again when her huſband is dead, ſo Chriſtians may forſake the law of *Moſes*, to cleave to that of *Jeſus Chriſt*, and that they were delivered from the law of *Moſes*, that they might be ſubject to *Chriſt*, who calls them, and faſhions them to true holineſs. II. He ſhews next, that this change was very advantageous to them, ſince they were thereby in a condition to produce the fruits of holineſs, and to ſerve God with a new ſpirit. III. That he might the better explain his thoughts, he ſays, that the law was holy and good; that it was not the cauſe of ſin; but that it had not the ſame efficacy as the Goſpel, to ſanctify men, and to free them from corruption. It is in this view, that the apoſtle repreſents, in his own perſon, the ſtate of a man that lives under the law, and who is in ſubjection to ſin and death; and he renders thanks to God for having delivered him from that condition, through *Jeſus Chriſt* our Lord.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS is a chapter which ought to be well underſtood, and which muſt not be miſapplied. The deſign of St. *Paul* is, to teach that the doctrine of grace tends to ſanctify men, as he had determined in the preceding chapter. Thus when he makes mention of *a carnal man ſold to ſin*, in whom there is no good, who is a ſlave to the law of ſin, who does not do the good which he approves, but who commits the evil he diſapproves; it muſt be not thought that he intended to deſcribe the condition of a regenerate man, and of a Chriſtian, that partakes of the ſpirit

of *Jeſus-Chriſt;* for the apoſtle ſays, in this very chapter, that Chriſtians are delivered from this ſtate of ſin and condemnation, to bear fruit unto God, and ſerve him with a new heart; and we are taught in the following chapter, that believers are no longer under the bondage of the fleſh and of ſin, but that they have been ſet free from them by *Jeſus Chriſt* our Lord. But St. *Paul* deſigned to repreſent, in his own perſon, in a figurative way of ſpeaking, very uſual with him, the condition of a man who is under the law; and who, not having faith and the ſpirit of *Chriſt*, is a ſlave to his paſſions. The doctrine of the apoſtle, therefore amounts to this: That the law had not the ſame efficacy as the Goſpel, to deliver men from their corruption, and to ſanctify them; and therefore, that the doctrine of juſtification by faith, very far from indulging men in the liberty of ſinning, tends to render them holy, and to free them from the ſlavery of their paſſions. From whence it follows, that thoſe who are ſtill engaged in this ſlavery, and in whom the deſires of the fleſh prevail, have not a true faith, and belong not to *Jeſus Chriſt.*

CHAP. VIII.

I. ST. *Paul* goes on to ſhew, that Chriſtians are no longer ſubject to condemnation and to ſin, like thoſe who are under the law; and that they do not govern themſelves by the motions of the fleſh, but by thoſe of the ſpirit of God; whence he concludes, that believers were under an indiſpenſible obligation to live, not according to the fleſh, but according to the ſpirit, and to behave themſelves as the children of God, and heirs of his kingdom. II. And becauſe it might be imagined Chriſtians were not reconciled with God, ſince they are expoſed to perſecutions, the apoſtle proves, that theſe perſecutions hinder them not from partaking of the love of God. This is what he means, when he ſays, that all creatures, that is, all the faithful, underwent great evils; but that, however,

ever, they waited with a firm hope for the manifeſtation of the glory of the children of God. III. St. *Paul* adds, that God ſupported them by his Spirit in the midſt of their diſtreſſes, that he heard their prayers, and that their afflictions were ſo far from being hurtful to them, that they contributed to their happineſs, ſince God had decreed that the faithful ſhould arrive at glory through ſufferings, after the example of *Jeſus Chriſt*. IV. From all this the apoſtle infers, that the happineſs of God's elect is certain; and that God having given them his own Son, who died, and intercedes for them in heaven, no creature nor any evil thing can hinder them from attaining everlaſting happineſs.

REFLECTIONS.

THE inſtructions which the firſt part of this chapter affords us are, I. That the condition of true believers is very happy, ſince there is no more condemnation for them, and ſince they are delivered from ſin and death, by the grace of our Lord *Jeſus Chriſt*, and by the power of his Spirit. II. That the true and ſureſt token by which we may diſcover thoſe that belong to *Chriſt*, is, that they do not live according to the fleſh, but mortify the luſts thereof; that they ſet their hearts upon ſpiritual things, and follow the motions of the Spirit of God in their whole behaviour. III. That Chriſtians therefore ought to ſtudy to live a holy life; that thoſe who live in ſin have not the Spirit of *Chriſt*, nor can they pleaſe God, but are in a ſtate of condemnation and death; whereas thoſe who labour to mortify the deeds of the body, do partake of the ſpiritual life, and of the inheritance which God reſerves for all his children. The ſecond part of this chapter teaches us, I. That the troubles and afflictions of this life, are not to be compared with the joys of heaven, and are ſo far from being obſtacles to the happineſs of God's children, that they rather promote it; and that in general all things work together for good

good to thoſe that love God. II. That the faithful, and thoſe that God loves moſt, do ſigh and groan, in expectation of this great glory which God has reſerved for them, and are ſometimes expoſed to the ſevereſt trials; but that God ſupports and comforts them in their conflicts by his ſpirit, and even makes uſe of afflictions to lead them to glory, and make them conformable to *Jeſus Chriſt*. III. The apoſtle tells us, that God will infallibly glorify all the elect; that having given them his Son, he will with him grant them every thing that is neceſſary; that the death and reſurrection of *Chriſt*, his aſcenſion into heaven, and his interceſſion, ought to fill them with a firm truſt in the midſt of their ſevereſt trials; and that there is no creature in heaven or earth, that can ſeparate them from the love of God. Theſe conſiderations tend very much to the comfort of the true children of God, and are very proper to ſupport them in their afflictions, to fill them with joy, hope, and confidence, and to confirm them more and more in the love of God and true holineſs.

CHAP. IX.

ST. *Paul* having taught, that the Gentiles would partake of the grace of God as well as the *Jews*, an objection ſeemed to follow from this doctrine, *viz*, That the *Jews*, who were the choſen people of God, were excluded from the promiſes, while the Gentiles, who deſcended not from *Abraham*, were made the people of God: this objection he anſwers, I. By expreſſing his tender regard for the *Jews*, which was ſo great, that he was willing to devote himſelf to death, and to be uſed like the worſt of men, if that might contribute to their ſalvation. II. He ſhews next, by the example of *Iſaac*, whom God preferred to *Iſhmael*, who was alſo the ſon of *Abraham*; and by the example of *Jacob*, who was choſen before *Eſau*, although both had the ſame father and mother, and were twins, that

that all thoſe who are deſcended from *Abraham*, are not conſidered as his poſterity, nor comprehended in the divine covenant. III. St. *Paul* lays down farther, that God may admit into his covenant, and chooſe for ſalvation, thoſe whom he thinks fit; and that men have no reaſon to complain, becauſe he does nothing, even with the wicked, but with juſtice and goodneſs; bearing long with them, and rejecting them only becauſe of their unbelief. IV. Laſtly, He concludes from what he had ſaid, that God might call the Gentiles to ſalvation; which he confirms by the prophets, who had plainly foretold the calling of the Gentiles, and the rejection of the *Jews*.

REFLECTIONS.

THE abſtract and ſubſtance of this chapter is, that God, who is the Lord of all things, and who is perfectly juſt and ſupremely good, may impart his favours to whom he pleaſes, and that men have no reaſon to complain; that accordingly, he might decree ſalvation to the Gentiles as well as to the *Jews*, and even juſtly reject the *Jews* becauſe of their unbelief, as the prophets expreſsly foretold. This doctrine obliges us to praiſe the mercy of the Lord, who has vouchſafed to call us to his covenant, who were originally Gentiles; and to acknowledge, that if we be choſen for ſalvation, it is wholly owing to the favour of God. We are to conſider, in the next place, that as all thoſe who deſcended from *Abraham* did not partake of the promiſes of God; and that even the *Jews*, to whom theſe promiſes were made, have been caſt off by reaſon of their unbelief, notwithſtanding the privileges of their calling; ſo the advantages of the divine covenant will become uſeleſs to us, if we do not make ſuitable returns to the goodneſs to which God has ſhewn us, and if we exclude ourſelves from ſalvation by our ingratitude and unbelief.

CHAP.

CHAP. X.

I. ST. *Paul* continues to treat of the rejection of the *Jews*, and calling of the *Gentiles;* he expreſſes *a tender regard for the Jews,* bearing them witneſs that moſt of them had a zeal for God; but they had rejected the Goſpel, becauſe they placed their righteouſneſs in the law of *Moſes,* not obſerving that that law led them to *Jeſus Chriſt.* II. He ſhews, next by the words of *Moſes,* that faith is a much more eaſy means of being juſtified before God, than the law was; and that this means of obtaining ſalvation conſiſts in believing heartily in *Jeſus Chriſt,* and in making a public profeſſion of his doctrine. III. He adds, that this ſalvation was offered to all men by the preaching of the Goſpel; and proves from the prophets, and particularly from *Moſes* and *Iſaiah,* that the Gentiles were to be called, and that the *Jews* ſhould be rejected, becauſe of their unbelief and hardneſs of heart.

REFLECTIONS.

WE learn from hence, I. That there is no other means of attaining to ſalvation, but that which is offered us in *Jeſus Chriſt,* and that thoſe who ſeek for other means cannot be ſaved. II. That the way which the Goſpel preſcribes for juſtification, has nothing in it beyond our power, or which is not even very eaſy; and that therefore we ſhall be inexcuſable if we do not lay hold of ſo precious an advantage. III. St. *Paul* teaches us in this chapter, that all thoſe ſhall be ſaved who with their heart believe in the Lord *Jeſus,* and confeſs him with their mouth; which ſhews, that a ſincere faith, and a public profeſſion of the Goſpel, is abſolutely neceſſary to ſalvation. IV. He likewiſe teaches us, that God has been pleaſed to offer ſalvation to all mankind by the Goſpel; that faith comes by hearing the word of God; and, that this word may be heard, there muſt be perſons ſent to preach it. This ſhould convince us of the neceſſity of preaching the

the Goſpel, and the value we ought to have for the word of God, and the miniſters of the Goſpel. V. And laſtly, We ſee that the calling of the Gentiles, and the unbelief of the *Jews*, were expreſsly foretold. Here we are to conſider on one hand, that God foreſaw, and, long before it came to paſs, foretold what was to happen to the *Jews* and Gentiles; which invincibly proves, that there is a Providence which governs all things, and that the Chriſtian Religion, is of divine original; and, on the other hand, it is a warning to us, that thoſe Chriſtians who obey not the Goſpel, and reſiſt the heavenly call, ſhall be deprived of ſalvation, as the *Jews* were, and ſhall even be more ſeverely puniſhed than they.

CHAP. XI.

ST. *Paul*, having ſpoken of the rejection of the *Jews* aſks whether God had wholly caſt off his people whom he had choſen? To which he himſelf anſwers two things: I. The one is, that all the *Jews* were not rejected, ſince there were ſeveral of them who had believed in *Jeſus Chriſt;* as in the time of *Elijah*, there were in *Iſrael* many worſhippers of the true God; but that the reſt of that nation continued in unbelief, as had been foretold by the prophets. II. The other is, that the *Jews* were not caſt off for ever, but only for a time; and that their fall had given occaſion to the calling of the Gentiles; but that they would one day be re-admitted into covenant with God. III. After this the apoſtle exhorts the Gentiles to improve the goodneſs of God towards them, and his ſeverity towards the *Jews*, leſt if they ſhould be puffed up with pride, and fall into unbelief like the *Jews*, they alſo ſhould be cut off. To this end he compares the Gentiles to a wild olive tree, grafted into the good olive-tree, by which laſt he repreſented the *Jews*. IV. And laſtly, He plainly foretels the converſion of the *Jews*, proving it from the prophets; and concludes this ſubject, adoring the wiſdom and mercy of God,

God, which appear in his dealings with *Jews* and Gentiles, and what is to befal them before the end of the world.

REFLECTIONS.

THE general reflection on this chapter is, that God had not entirely caſt off the *Jews*, ſince divers of them did believe the Goſpel, and the time will come when all that nation will be converted. This proves the veracity of God's promiſes, and is a very ſtrong confirmation of the truth of the Chriſtian Religion, and of the divine authority of the Holy Scriptures. To this general conſideration we may add the four following particular reflections. I. That as in the time of the apoſtles, and in the days of *Elijah*, there were believers among the *Jews*, God has always ſome elect in the midſt of the greateſt depravity. II. St. *Paul* ſhews the uſe we ſhould make of the doctrine he has taught in this Epiſtle concerning the rejection of the *Jews*, and the calling of the Gentiles; namely, that it ought to inſpire us with ſentiments of fear, humility, and gratitude; us, I ſay, who are the poſterity of the heathens, and induce us to make a right uſe of the goodneſs of God, and perſevere in faith, leſt we loſe the title we now have to the grace of God, and eternal life. III. We have here a moſt remarkable prediction of the converſion of the whole *Jewiſh* nation; and of all other nations coming into the church. The divine authority of the Scriptures, and the prophecies which have been already accompliſhed, ſhould convince us of the certainty of this great and happy event. And we plainly ſee God intends one day to call the *Jews*, ſince they ſtill ſubſiſt, though diſperſed throughout the world for ſo many ages. We ought to expect, with faith and joy, the accompliſhment of this prediction, to pray for the coming of the kingdom of God, and for the converſion of the *Jews*, and in the mean time to entertain a tender compaſſion, and true charity for that people whom God ſtill loves. IV. And laſtly, When we conſider

God's

God's dealings with *Jews* and Gentiles, and how he propoſes to unite them one day in his church, this ſhould ſtir us up to adore the ways of the Lord, to celebrate his mercy and wiſdom, and to ſay with St. *Paul, O the depth of the riches, both of the wiſdom and knowledge of God! How unſearchable are his judgments, and his ways paſt finding out!—For of him, and through him, and to him are all things: To whom be glory for ever.* Amen.

CHAP. XII.

AFTER St. *Paul* had ſhewn that the Gentiles were called to ſalvation by the great mercy of God, the remaining part of this Epiſtle is taken up in ſetting forth the duties of the Chriſtian life, and particularly of peace and charity. In this chapter he does three things: I. He exhorts believers to devote themſelves to the ſervice of God, and to renounce the world. II. He recommends to Chriſtians, and eſpecially to ſuch as had any office in the church, or any gifts which diſtinguiſh them from others, to exerciſe their callings, and to employ their gifts for the public good. III. He exhorts them above all to charity; he deſcribes the manner of exerciſing this virtue towards our brethren, and towards thoſe who hate and perſecute us.

REFLECTIONS.

WE may learn in general, from this and the following chapters, in which St. *Paul*, after having treated of juſtification and the calling of the Gentiles, ſpeaks of the duties of Chriſtian morality; that the deſign of the Goſpel is the practice of holineſs, and of good works; and that this in particular is the effect which the doctrine of our redemption ought to produce, as well as the conſideration of the great mercy that God has manifeſted to us in his Son. This chapter furniſhes us likewiſe with three particular leſſons. I. That true piety and the ſervice which God requires of us, conſiſts

ſiſts in devoting ourſelves entirely to him, in renouncing the world, in not imitating worldly men in their manner of living, and being renewed in our minds by an entire ſubmiſſion and conformity to the will of God. II. That being all members of the body of *Chriſt*, which is the church, we ought to apply the gifts we have received to the advantage of our brethren; thoſe of us, eſpecially, who are called to any office in the church, by diſcharging it with zeal and integrity. III. That charity is the moſt important duty, and comprehends all the reſt, and particularly the following, which the apoſtle here ſets down; which are, to love one another ſincerely; to be ready to do all good offices; to ſympathize in the good or evil that befalls our brethren; to comfort and aſſiſt thoſe that are in affliction; and to live together in a ſpirit of humility, peace, and unity. Charity does yet farther oblige Chriſtians to love and bleſs thoſe who hate them and injure them, to endeavour to have peace with all men, to abſtain from revenge, and to render good for evil. Theſe are the moſt eſſential duties of the Religion we profeſs, and we deſerve the name of Chriſtians no farther than we ſincerely practiſe them.

CHAP. XIII.

ST. *Paul* ſpeaks in this chapter, I. Of our duty to the higher powers. II. Of love to our neighbour, which is the ſum of the law of God. III. He ſhews that Chriſtians ought to live in holineſs, ſobriety, and chaſtity, ſince God has delivered them from the darkneſs of ignorance, and enlightened them with the light of the Goſpel.

REFLECTIONS.

THE three parts of this chapter afford us theſe three inſtructions: I. That kings, princes, and magiſtrates, are appointed by God; and that it is from him they receive authority to govern the people, and puniſh thoſe who diſturb the peace of ſociety; and there-

therefore every one is bound in conſcience to ſubmit to the higher powers, to be faithful to them, and to render them all that is due to them. II. That the love of our neighbour is as it were the ſum of the whole law, which teaches us, that charity is a very conſiderable part of the duty of a Chriſtian; that the true way to fulfil what the law commands, is to have a ſpirit of peace, meekneſs, and forbearance, and to love our neighbour ſincerely. III. St. *Paul* teaches us, that ſince the clouds of ignorance, in which men formerly lived, are diſperſed by the light of the Goſpel which now ſhineth, we ought to avoid ſenſuality, diſſoluteneſs, impurity, and all the deſires of the fleſh, and to live in chaſtity and temperance, following the example and divine precepts of our great Lord and Maſter. And to encourage us to obſerve theſe holy laws, let us conſider the happy ſtate in which God has placed us; let us always repreſent to ourſelves, that the time of our ſalvation draws near, that our chief ſtudy may be, to partake of it through the mercy of our Lord *Jeſus Chriſt*. Amen.

CHAP. XIV.

FOR the right underſtanding of this chapter, we muſt remember, that there were in the time of St. *Paul* certain Chriſtians, who having been *Jews*, and not being ſufficiently inſtructed, ſcrupled to eat of certain meats, and obſerved a diſtinction of days, after the *Jewiſh* manner. St. *Paul* ſhews, I. How thoſe weak perſons were to be treated. He ſays, that we muſt bear with them, and avoid all diſputes with them, ſince they who had different ſentiments did follow each of them the dictates of their own conſcience, believing in *Chriſt*, and being partakers of his grace. II. To confirm this doctrine, he repreſents Chriſtians as living only unto the Lord, who alone has an entire authority over them; and therefore, every thing that they do, ſhould be deſigned for the glory of God, and the edification of others; that nobody has a right to condemn

condemn others, ſince every one is to give an account of himſelf to God. He ſhews, III. That thoſe who were better inſtructed in their Chriſtian liberty, ought not to abuſe that liberty, nor offend weak people, who made a ſcruple of eating certain meats. IV. And laſtly, he ſays, that the ſpirit of Chriſtianity is a ſpirit of peace and forbearance; that it was a great ſin to condemn, diſcourage, or give cauſe of offence to our neighbour; but that every one ought to abſtain from what he thought unlawful, and even from thoſe things which he is in doubt about, ſince every thing that is done without faith, and the approbation of our conſcience, is ſinful.

REFLECTIONS.

THE doctrine St. *Paul* here teaches amounts to this: That Chriſtians are bound to bear with each other; that thoſe who are moſt enlightened, ought to have the greateſt conſideration for ſuch as are weak, and leſs knowing than themſelves; that they ought not to deſpiſe them, nor do any thing that may grieve or offend them; that we ought even to abſtain from things indifferent and lawful, when we foreſee they may be an occaſion of ſcandal to others. Theſe are maxims of charity and forbearance, from which we ought never to depart; by the right obſervation of which, the glory of God, the peace of the church, and the common ſalvation, are very much promoted; while diſputes and quarrels are extremely prejudicial to the edification of the church, and therefore ought to be avoided as much as poſſible. Laſtly, We ſhould take particular notice of what St. *Paul* lays down in this whole chapter, and particularly at the end of it, *viz.* That every one ſhould have a great regard to his conſcience, and that *whatever is not of faith is ſin.* This teaches us, that thoſe who act againſt their own conſcience, or even thoſe that do a thing without being well aſſured in their mind that it is lawful, are very guilty before God, even though that thing be in itſelf innocent; and that, in order to pleaſe the Lord, and

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enjoy peace of conſcience, our firſt care ſhould be to be well inſtructed in our duty, and then follow the dictates of our conſcience, prudently avoiding every thing that may diſturb the peace of the church, or give offence to its members.

CHAP. XV.

I. THE apoſtle continues to exhort the *Romans* to charity and forbearance towards ſuch as are weak in faith, propoſing to them, for that purpoſe, the example of *Jeſus Chriſt*, and beſeeching God to inſpire them with ſentiments of peace and charity. II. In this view he repreſents to them, that *Chriſt* was ſent to unite the *Jews* and Gentiles in his church, as has been foretold by the prophets; by which he would convince them, that there ought to be no diviſion among them. III. He ſpeaks next of his miniſtry, and of the plentiful fruits of his preaching among the Gentiles, and in ſeveral parts of the world. IV. And laſtly, He tells the *Romans* that he intended to viſit them after he had made a journey to *Jeruſalem*, on account of a collection which was making for the Chriſtians in that city. He then recommends himſelf to their prayers, and prays likewiſe for them.

REFLECTIONS.

WE learn from this chapter, I. That thoſe who are advanced in knowledge and piety, ought to behave with great condeſcenſion and charity to thoſe who are not come up to them, and thereby to imitate the meekneſs and goodneſs of our Lord. II. St. *Paul* ſhews the deſign of this Epiſtle to the *Romans*, and the end of his doctrine, ſaying, that *Chriſt* came to ſave, not only the *Jews*, but the Gentiles; and to accompliſh, by this means, the promiſes which God had made to their forefathers by the prophets. This is a truth which we ſhould meditate upon, in order to ſtrengthen our faith, and excite our gratitude towards God. III. We are to conſider what St. *Paul* ſays in

this chapter of his travels and labours; of the wonderful ſucceſs of his miniſtry, of the many churches which he had founded in ſeveral parts of the world, and of his deſign to go to *Rome* and other places; all which is a proof of the great zeal of this apoſtle, his perfect charity, and, above all, of the power of God, and the divine efficacy of the Goſpel, ſo viſible in the miracles St. *Paul* wrought, and the ſurpriſing ſucceſs of his preaching. This is an example which the miniſters of *Chriſt* ought to imitate as far as they are able, by labouring inceſſantly in the eſtabliſhment of the kingdom of God. IV. And laſtly, St. *Paul*'s ſo earneſtly recommending himſelf to the prayers of the Chriſtians at *Rome* ſhews, that the miniſters of *Chriſt* do greatly ſtand in need of the prayers of the church, and that one of the chief duties of Chriſtians, is to pray for their ſpiritual guides; as it is likewiſe the duty of paſtors to offer up continually prayers for their flocks.

CHAP. XVI.

THIS chapter contains, I. The ſalutations St. *Paul* ſends to ſeveral Chriſtians of *Rome* in his own name, and in the name of the miniſters of *Chriſt*, and the believers that were with him at *Corinth*. II. Exhortations to beware of thoſe who occaſion troubles in the church, and who teach falſe doctrines. III. His wiſhes and prayers in behalf of the *Romans*.

REFLECTIONS.

THERE are two things to be obſerved in the ſalutations contained in this chapter: The firſt is, that the Goſpel had already made a conſiderable progreſs at *Rome*, and that there were in that city a great number of people, who made profeſſion of the Chriſtian Religion. The ſecond reflection relates to St. *Paul*'s love and charity to the church at *Rome*, and particularly to the faithful, who are here named. Such is the true ſpirit of Chriſtianity. Thus do Chriſtians ſincerely love one another, are ſtrictly united, and pray for each

each other, though they be never ſo diſtant; particularly for thoſe who are diſtinguiſhed by their zeal and piety. II. St. *Paul* directs us next how to behave towards thoſe who teach falſe doctrines, or cauſe ſects and diviſions in the church; that is, to be upon our guard againſt them, to avoid them, to adhere conſtantly to the pure doctrine of the Goſpel, and to the paſtors who preach it. III. And laſtly, We ought to join our thankſgivings to thoſe of the apoſtle at the end of this Epiſtle, and to bleſs God, that he has revealed in *Chriſt Jeſus* the calling of the Gentiles, and the redemption of mankind, a myſtery which, till then, had been kept ſecret from the foundation of the world; and had made known the Goſpel to all nations for the obedience of faith. To this great God, only wiſe, be glory for ever, though *Chriſt Jeſus*. *Amen.*

The End of the Epiſtle of St. PAUL *to the* ROMANS.

THE

FIRST EPISTLE OF ST. PAUL

TO THE

CORINTHIANS.

ARGUMENT.

This Epiſtle was wrote about the fifty-ſixth year of Chriſt. *St.* Paul *gives ſeveral inſtructions in it, concerning the defects and diſorders in the church of* Corinth, *particularly the diviſions among them; and upon ſeveral important articles of religion.*

CHAP. I.

I. THE apoſtle begins the firſt chapter with ſalutations, thankſgivings, and prayers. II. He reproves the *Corinthians* for the diviſions that reigned among them, on account of the miniſters who had preached the Goſpel to them, ſome of them being for St. *Peter*, others for *Apollos*, or for himſelf; whereas, being baptized in the name of *Chriſt*, and not in the name of any of the apoſtles, they ought to look upon themſelves as belonging to *Chriſt* alone. III. And when ſeveral endeavoured to make St. *Paul* deſpicable, the apoſtle confeſſes that his preaching was not attended with worldly wiſdom and eloquence, but that he

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preached after a very plain manner, and ſuitable to the nature of the Goſpel, which is the doctrine of the croſs: God having thought fit, in his infinite wiſdom, to ſave mankind in a way which appeared weak and fooliſh to unbelievers, and the wiſe men of the world, *viz.* by *Chriſt* crucified; and to call to ſalvation ſuch as were the leaſt conſiderable among men.

REFLECTIONS *after reading the chapter.*

I. WE may learn from what St. *Paul* ſays at the beginning of this Epiſtle, and the prayers he makes for the *Corinthians*, that the perfection of Chriſtians conſiſts in being enriched with all ſorts of ſpiritual gifts, ſo as to be found unblameable at the coming of *Chriſt*. This is what we ought all to endeavour at, and what we ought to deſire for each other. II. St. *Paul*'s reproof of the *Corinthians* for their diviſions, teaches us, that there is nothing more hurtful to the church than ſchiſms and diviſions, eſpecially about matters of religion; that Chriſtians ought never to call themſelves the diſciples and followers of any miniſter or teacher, whoever he be; and that the miniſters of the Goſpel, far from giving occaſion to ſuch diviſions, or of keeping them up, ought, after the example of St. *Paul*, to hinder them as much as poſſible, being always actuated by a ſpirit of humility and peace, ſeeking nothing but their Maſter's glory, and the edification of his church, which is beſt promoted by unity and concord. III. It appears from this chapter, that miniſters ought to preach the Goſpel in great ſimplicity, without aiming at the wiſdom and eloquence of the world, which is nothing but fooliſhneſs before God; the end of their miniſtry being to preach *Chriſt* crucified. IV. What St. *Paul* here ſays, ſhews, that Chriſtians ought not to value riches, nobility, power, and other temporal advantages, which give no title to the grace of God, but are often an obſtacle to true faith. Laſtly, Since the doctrine of the Goſpel, and particularly the croſs of *Chriſt*, is the means that God

has choſen, in his wiſdom and goodneſs, to ſave men; we ought to cleave to *Jeſus who is made unto us wiſdom, and righteouſneſs, and ſanctification, and redemption.*

CHAP. II.

THIS chapter conſiſts of three parts. St. *Paul* ſays, I. That he had preached the Goſpel with great ſimplicity. II. That though his doctrine was plain, yet it was nevertheleſs very ſublime, and of a heavenly and divine original. III. Whence he concludes, that this doctrine being ſpiritual and heavenly, ought to be preached after the plaineſt manner; and that if it was rejected by any upon that account, it was becauſe ſuch men were carnal and earthly-minded.

REFLECTIONS.

THE miniſters of *Chriſt*, and all Chriſtians, ſhould learn from this chapter, I. That the vain eloquence and the falſe wiſdom of the world, ought not to have any thing to do with the preaching of the Goſpel. II. That the doctrine of the Goſpel, though very plain, is the moſt ſublime, and the moſt perfect that ever was preached; that it infinitely ſurpaſſes all that the moſt learned men could ever diſcover; teaching things which *eye hath not ſeen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, what God hath revealed unto us by his ſpirit.* It follows from hence, that a divine revelation was abſolutely neceſſary to our ſalvation, which we can attain no other way; that we ought therefore to eſteem the doctrine of the Goſpel above all things: and that thoſe who preach it ſhould never depart from the Chriſtian ſimplicity; and that this doctrine does not want to be ſupported by worldly eloquence. III. We ought likewiſe to obſerve what St. *Paul* ſays farther, that *the natural man receiveth not the things of the ſpirit of God; for they are fooliſhneſs unto him.* This teaches us, that when men do not underſtand nor reliſh the doctrine of *Jeſus Chriſt*, it is becauſe they are carnal, full of prejudices,

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and worldly-minded. This doctrine being altogether ſpiritual, can be received by none but thoſe who are ſpiritual, who are weaned from the love of the world, and ſuffer themſelves to be guided by the ſpirit of God.

CHAP. III.

ST. *Paul* does four things in this chapter: I. He says, that he had taught the *Corinthians* nothing but the firſt principles of Chriſtianity, becauſe of their weak condition, and he reproaches them for continuing ſtill in the ſame ſtate, as appeared from the diviſions that reigned among them on account of the miniſters that preached the Goſpel to them. II. To put a ſtop to theſe diviſions, he ſays, miniſters are only inſtruments in the hand of God for the ſalvation of men, and that the whole fruit of their miniſtry proceeds from God alone. III. To the ſame end he adds, that, like a wiſe maſter-builder, he had laid the foundation, that is, he was the firſt who preached the Goſpel to the *Corinthians;* and that thoſe who came after him, ought to take care to preach none but true and uſeful doctrines, which he calls, gold, ſilver, and precious ſtones; but not vain and doubtful doctrines, which he compares to hay or ſtubble; and ſays, that thoſe who preach ſuch doctrines would loſe the fruits of their labour; but that nevertheleſs if they had preſerved the fundamentals of Chriſtianity, they would be ſaved, as paſſing through the fire, and by a particular favour. IV. And laſtly, St. *Paul* declares, that the church being the temple and houſe of God, he will deſtroy thoſe that hinder its edification, by teaching dangerous doctrines, and by ſtirring up diviſions, or in any other manner; and that the *Corinthians* ſhould glory in God above, and not in thoſe who preached the Goſpel, ſince the apoſtles and other miniſters were not appointed for their own advantage, but for the glory of God.

REFLEC-

REFLECTIONS.

THE four parts of this chapter furniſhes us with four inſtructions. I. That the miniſters of *Jeſus Chriſt* ought to propoſe his doctrine with prudence, and ſuit their diſcourſes to the capacity of thoſe whom they teach. II. When St. *Paul* ſays, that he *planted, that Apollos watered, but that God gave the increaſe*, this ſhews, on one hand, that the miniſtry of paſtors and teachers is very neceſſary, it being the method which God has thought fit to make uſe of for the edification of the church; but that on the other hand, the efficacy of their preaching muſt be aſcribed to God alone. III. The third inſtruction is, that it is of great importance that none but profitable and edifying doctrines be taught in the church; and that miniſters ſhould be careful never to mingle with the eſſential doctrines of religion ſuch as be vain, uncertain, and uſeleſs, for fear of loſing the fruit of their labour, and of hindering edification. IV. When St. *Paul* repreſents to the *Corinthians*, that they were the temple of God: and that, if any one defiled this temple, him would God deſtroy; this ſhould teach all Chriſtians, and eſpecially thoſe who are ſet over the church, how careful they ought to be to procure the edification of others, and avoid every thing that may give offence, and occaſion trouble in it. Laſtly, The apoſtle ſhews, that inſtead of taking occaſion from the miniſtry of the Goſpel to be divided, they ought to refer this holy office, and all other ſpiritual advantages they enjoy, and in general all things, to the glory of God and their own ſalvation. This is the great deſign they ought always to have in view.

CHAP. IV.

ST. *Paul*'s deſign here, is to remedy the diviſions that prevailed in the church of *Corinth*, on account of the miniſters who had preached the Goſpel there. In which view he does three things. I. He ſays, that the

the *Corinthians* ought to reſpect the miniſters of *Chriſt*, but that it was not for them to prefer ſome before others; that although he diſcharged his office with a good conſcience, he did not think himſelf better than his colleagues; that all thoſe gifts which miniſters are endowed with, do proceed from God; and that it is God alone, and not men, who is to judge of their fidelity. II. And as the perſecutions to which the apoſtle was expoſed, more than any other miniſter of the Goſpel, gave ſome men occaſion to deſpiſe him, he takes an opportunity to deſcribe the evils he endured, and the patience with which he ſuffered, and even glories in them; that ſo he might induce the *Corinthians* to think of him as they ought, and to imitate his patience, meekneſs, and humility. III. He acquaints them, that he ſhould ſhortly viſit them, threatening to make uſe of that power which God had given him to put a ſtop to the diſorders in their church, and to puniſh thoſe who were the authors of them.

REFLECTIONS.

WE ſee here, I. What ſentiments Chriſtians ought to entertain of the true miniſters of *Chriſt*; namely, to eſteem and reverence them, but yet without attributing to them what belongs only to God, and without adhering to ſome, and deſpiſing others. II. The manner in which St. *Paul* ſpeaks of the different opinions men had of him, teaches us, that we ought not indeed to be intirely indifferent whether men think well or ill of us; yet, that we ought not to ſet too high a value upon the opinion of men; that it is God only who can judge of our faithfulneſs, and that it is he who will make manifeſt hidden things, and the thoughts of men's hearts, and who will render to every one his due praiſes. III. That all the gifts and advantages we enjoy proceed from God; that we have nothing but what we have received from him; and that therefore, inſtead of valuing ourſelves upon them, the glory thereof belongs to him alone. IV. We ſee

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in the deſcription which St. *Paul* gives of his ſufferings, that the faithful ſervants of God, and all true Chriſtians, may be expoſed to diſgrace and miſeries of every kind; but the example of this apoſtle likewiſe ſhews, that ſuch as are thus afflicted, far from thinking themſelves unhappy in this condition, and growing uneaſy under it, or deſiring to revenge themſelves upon thoſe who are the cauſe of their ſufferings, ought to bear all theſe evils with patience, and even with joy, for the edification of the church; and to pray for thoſe who injure them; and to be little concerned at the hatred and contempt of the world, provided they have the approbation of God and their own conſcience. The laſt verſes of this chapter ſhew, that St. *Paul* tenderly loved the *Corinthians*, that it was againſt his will that he threatened them with chaſtiſement, and that he had nothing elſe in view but their edification. Such is the ſpirit of all the true miniſters of the Lord.

CHAP. V.

I. ST. *Paul* reproves the *Corinthians* for ſuffering among them an inceſtuous perſon, and he delivers him to Satan, that is to ſay, to be afflicted in his body by Satan, which was an extraordinary puniſhment that the apoſtles had power to inflict. II. He repreſents to them, by the compariſon of leaven, that it is very dangerous to ſuffer notorious ſinners in the church, ſince they infect and corrupt others. III. And laſtly, he orders the *Corinthians* to cut off from among them, by excommunication, thoſe that are impure, and all ſuch as live in a ſcandalous manner, and not to conſider them as brethren, or members of the church.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter contains a very important doctrine; the neceſſity of diſcipline in the church, and eſpecially of that part of diſcipline which conſiſts in excommunication.

nication. St. *Paul* reproves the *Corinthians* for not removing the inceſtuous perſon from among them; which teaches us, that when perſons, who ſtile themſelves Chriſtians, fall into ſins which diſhonour the religion of *Jeſus Chriſt*, the whole church ought to mourn for it, and ſhould not ſuffer thoſe perſons to remain in her communion; but that they ought to be cut off by excommunication. St. *Paul* moſt expreſsly declares, that we ought not to acknowledge for brethren, nor even for Chriſtians, the unclean, unjuſt, ſlanderers, drunkards, or other ſcandalous ſinners, nor have any familiar dealings with them. This is the law of *Jeſus Chriſt:* This is what the holy apoſtles have commanded in his name, and the rule appointed by them in all churches for the honour of the Chriſtian Religion, and the ſaving the ſinners themſelves, and to prevent their evil examples from corrupting other members of the church, and this is what the firſt Chriſtians religiouſly practiſed; on which account we are forced to own, that the church is not now governed as it ought to be, ſince this kind of excommunication is hardly exerciſed any where; nevertheleſs, the duty of all true Chriſtians is to avoid, as far as poſſible, all correſpondence with wicked men, and to diſtinguiſh themſelves from them, by a holy and exemplary life; and let us remember, that thoſe ſinners who are ſuffered to live in the external communion of the church, though they deſerve to be excluded from it, are not owned by *Chriſt* for his true members, nor ſhall they eſcape the puniſhment due to their hypocriſy and wickedneſs.

CHAP. VI.

I. THE apoſtle reproves the *Corinthians* for having recourſe to heathen judges and magiſtrates to determine their law-ſuits. II. He adds, upon this occaſion, that thoſe who wrong their neighbour, ſhall not enter into the kingdom of heaven, any more than thoſe who are guilty of impurity, and other crimes which

which he here mentions. III. He exhorts the *Corinthians* to pay great regard to the edification of their brethren, in the uſe of things indifferent and lawful; but above all, to avoid impurity, proving by ſeveral arguments, that this is by no means a matter of indifference, but in itſelf evil, and utterly inconſiſtent with the profeſſion of Chriſtianity.

REFLECTIONS.

THE reflections on this chapter are the four following: I. That Chriſtians, being brethren, ought to avoid law-ſuits as much as poſſible; that they ſhould endeavour to determine difficult points in an amicable way; and if they be forced to have recourſe to judges, they ſhould do it in a ſpirit of juſtice and equity, of meekneſs and moderation, and without giving any ſcandal. II. That thoſe who wrong others, whether by unjuſt law-ſuits, in any other manner, ſhall no more partake of the kingdom of God, than the impure, than thieves and covetous, or other ſcandalous ſinners. Let it be here obſerved, that ſome of the *Corinthians* had lived in theſe crimes while they were heathens, but that God engaged them to renounce them all, by calling them to the Chriſtian Religion, and by cleanſing them from their ſins by the blood of *Jeſus Chriſt*, and by the grace of his Holy Spirit; which ſhews, that our holy Religion does not allow men to continue in their ſins, but has a direct tendency to cleanſe and ſanctify them, and affords them all neceſſary means and aſſiſtance to that end. III. The third inſtruction relates to impurity. St. *Paul* ſhews in this chapter, that this ſin ſeparates thoſe who commit it from the communion of *Chriſt*, and ſuffers them no longer to be his members; that unclean perſons groſsly offend our bleſſed Saviour, diſhonour their own body, which ought to be the temple of the Holy Ghoſt, and thereby deprive themſelves of that Holy Spirit. Laſtly, He declares, that ſince we are redeemed by the precious blood of *Jeſus Chriſt*, our bodies

bodies belong to God as well as our ſouls: that therefore we are no longer our own, but are bound to glorify God both with our ſouls and bodies. All theſe conſiderations are of great weight, and ſince St. *Paul* alledges ſo many reaſons to diſſuade Chriſtians from impurity, we plainly ſee that this ſin is very great; that we ought to have it in abhorrence; and endeavour, in all reſpects, to lead a pure and holy life.

CHAP. VII.

ST. *Paul* anſwers in this chapter ſeveral queſtions which the *Corinthians* had propoſed about marriage. I. He gives an account of the inſtitution and duties of the marriage ſtate. II. He ſays, that there is an advantage in not being married; but that, however, Chriſtians are at liberty to marry. III. He exhorts married perſons not to ſeparate, and ſhews what was the duty, in this reſpect, of ſuch men and women as were married to heathens. IV. He orders all Chriſtians to continue in the ſeveral callings and conditions in which Providence had placed them, and to live according to the will of God. V. Laſtly, He declares, that the condition of virgins, and thoſe who lived in celibacy, and of widows, was the happieſt, particularly in thoſe times of perſecution. But, however, that they were at liberty to marry.

REFLECTIONS.

FROM what has been read we may learn, I. That marriage is a holy and honourable ſtate; but that the duty of Chriſtians in that ſtate is, to live in union and concord, in purity and chaſtity, in piety and devotion, by ſetting apart ſeaſons for faſting and prayer. II. That although the condition of thoſe who do not marry be more happy, yet every man is left to his liberty; that every one ought to regulate his conduct in this matter, as he finds himſelf called to live in a married or ſingle ſtate; but, that thoſe who are not married, are bound to live in great purity

rity and continency. III. That husbands and wives ought not to separate from each other; but, on the contrary, are to live peaceably together, and to edify each other; by endeavouring to promote the salvation of one another. IV. That God having thought fit there should be different states and conditions in the world, every one ought to continue in his calling, provided it be a lawful one, and faithfully discharge all the duties in which his calling engages him, without endeavouring to alter his condition by sinful methods. V. That persons who do not marry have several advantages over others, provided they live in chastity, since they may serve God with less distraction in such a state; and in times of persecution are more free and better able to discharge their duty; but that, whether people marry, or whether they live in celibacy, they ought to be pure and chaste both in body and mind. VI. Another useful instruction which St. *Paul* here gives us, and which is adapted to all seasons and all persons, is, that our lives are short, that our condition in this world is very uncertain, and all things here below are transitory and vain; for which reason we ought not to set our hearts upon them, but should possess all things as if we possessed them not; that *they that weep should be as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away.*

CHAP. VIII.

ST. *Paul* examines the question proposed to him by the *Corinthians, whether it was lawful for* Christians to eat of things *that had been offered to* idols, and to be present at the feast of the heathens in the temples of their false gods; To which he answers, I. That Christians know very well there is but one God, and that idols are lifeless and vain, and could not defile the meats offered to them, and there-

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fore that it was lawful to eat even of meats offered to idols. Nevertheleſs the apoſtle obſerves, that, all had not the ſame degree of knowledge in this particular; and therefore, II. He warns thoſe Chriſtians who were moſt knowing, not to abuſe their liberty in this point, for fear they ſhould, by eating things offered to idols, give offence to weak Chriſtians, and occaſion them to ſin by eating contrary to the dictates of their conſcience, and even to fall into idolatry.

REFLECTIONS.

THOUGH we have no need to be informed at this time of the uſe of things ſacrificed to idols, ſince the idolatry of the heathens is aboliſhed, and we all know that there is but one God, and that idols are nothing; yet that does not hinder, but the doctrine which St. *Paul* lays down in this chapter, may be of general uſe. He teaches us here, that all Chriſtians, and eſpecially thoſe who are beſt inſtructed, ſhould have a great regard to thoſe that are not ſo well informed, and carefully avoid giving them ſcandal. The apoſtle further informs us, that we may offend our neighbour, not only by actions directly criminal, but likewiſe by ſuch as are lawful; for which reaſon we ought to behave with great circumſpection and prudence in the uſe of thoſe things, and not always do what is lawful. He ſhews us likewiſe, that it is a great ſin to give ſcandal to any one, ſince thereby we may be the occaſion of our neighbour's deſtruction, and may be extremely guilty even againſt *Chriſt* himſelf. Theſe rules are of great uſe, and ought to be continually remembered, that we may do nothing, even in things lawful, which may offend God, wound our conſcience, or occaſion our neighbour to ſin.

CHAP. IX.

ST. *Paul*'s deſign in this chapter, is to confirm, by his example, what he had taught in the foregoing;

going; namely, that when the edification of our neighbour may be promoted by it, we ought to abſtain even from things lawful. In this view he does three things: I. He aſſerts his right as an apoſtle, to a ſtipend for his ſupport. II. He adds, that he had not made uſe of his right, but ſhewn great condeſcenſion towards all, accommodating himſelf to the ſcruples of the weak, for fear of creating in them an averſion to the Goſpel. III. He exhorts the *Corinthians* to imitate him, and to forego the uſe of lawful things, when the edification of their neighbour, and the ſalvation of their own ſouls require it. And to engage them ſo to do, he propoſes the example of thoſe who formerly ſtrove in the public games of *Greece*, and who lived in great abſtemiouſneſs, abſtaining from every thing contrary to the way of life they had engaged in.

REFLECTIONS.

THE general deſign of this chapter is to teach us, that we muſt not always do what is lawful, and what we may have a right to do; but that we ought to abſtain from ſuch a right, when the glory of God and the ſalvation of our neighbour requſre it; and that it is the duty of Chriſtians to accommodate themſelves as much as poſſible to all, to have always a regard to the edification of others, and particularly the weak, in order to bring them to the faith. Beſides this general doctrine, which is of ſingular uſe, we have here ſome particular inſtructions, the chief of which are the three following: I. That Chriſtian churches are obliged by the divine law, and by the command of *Jeſus Chriſt*, to provide for the maintenance and ſupport of paſtors and their families. II. That the miniſters of the Goſpel, in imitation of St. *Paul*, ought to behave with much prudence and charity, diſregarding their own private intereſt, and adapting themſelves to mens weakneſs, and endeavouring by all means to gain to *Chriſt* as many ſouls

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as they can. III. That we cannot diſcharge the duties of our Chriſtian calling, without living in great temperance; that to that end we muſt mortify our bodies, bring them into ſubjection by abſtinence and labour; avoiding idleneſs, luxury, and every thing that indulges too much the fleſh, and purſuing ſuch a kind of life as is conformable to the precepts of the Goſpel, and the example of *Chriſt* and his apoſtles; that by theſe means we may obtain the glorious reward which is reſerved for all thoſe only that ſhall carefully diſcharge theſe duties.

CHAP. X

THE apoſtle continuing the ſubject he had been treating of in the two preceding chapters, touching the uſe of meats ſacrificed to idols, repreſents here to the *Corinthians*, I. That though the ancient *Iſraelites* were the people of God, and enjoyed advantages like thoſe which Chriſtians now do, yet they had been drawn away to idolatry and impurity, by being preſent at the idolatrous feaſts; and that by their ſenſuality and frequent rebellions they had brought upon themſelves the judgments of God. He propoſes theſe examples to the *Corinthians*, and particularly to thoſe who think themſelves leaſt in danger, and moſt knowing in their duty, to prevent their going to the idolatrous feaſts, for fear of expoſing themſelves to temptation, and falling into idolatry. II. In confirmation of this point, he adds further, that the uſe of the Lord's Supper, whereby Chriſtians partake together of the ſacrifice of *Jeſus Chriſt*, by drinking of the conſecrated cup, and eating all of the ſame bread, did not allow them to aſſiſt at the entertainments which the pagans made in honour of their idols, ſince that would be partaking of their ſacrifices, and having fellowſhip with devils and idolators which muſt neceſſarily expoſe them to divine vengeance. III. He concludes that Chriſtians might buy and eat of all kinds of meats, and in private eat of any thing that is

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ſet before them, unleſs they were told that ſuch meats had been ſacrificed to idols; in which caſe they ought to forbear, not becauſe it was ſinful to eat thereof, but to avoid giving ſcandal to thoſe who informed them of it. He continues this ſubject with exhorting the *Corinthians* to regard in all things the glory of God, and the edification of their neighbours.

REFLECTIONS.

WHAT has been ſaid in this chapter obliges us to conſider, I. That if the ancient *Jews* were puniſhed ſo ſeverely for having abuſed the favour God had granted them, we ſhall be puniſhed much more ſeverely, if we abuſe thoſe that we have received, ſince they are infinitely more excellent. II. The example of the *Iſraelites*, who, by being preſent at the feaſts of idolators, fell into impurity and idolatry, and the divine vengeance for ſo doing, is a warning to us, as St. *Paul* ſays, to avoid all occaſions of ſin, and particularly to ſhun all ſenſuality and uncleanneſs, leſt, if we ſuffer ourſelves to be carried away by them, we be expoſed to the judgments of God. III. We ought to conſider, that if St. *Paul* aſſerts, that Chriſtians might not partake of the table of the Lord, and at the ſame time eat of that which was ſacrificed to idols, the participation of the Lord's Supper is not leſs incompatible with a carnal and corrupt life; and that the public and ſolemn commemoration which we make in this ſacrament of the ſacrifice of *Jeſus Chriſt*, does indiſpenſibly oblige us to lead a pure and holy life. IV. Let us carefully retain this general doctrine, that in all our actions, even in thoſe that are indifferent and lawful, we ought always to have in view the glory of God, and the edification of our neighbour, as St. *Paul* directs by the rule which he gives us: *Whether ye eat or drink, or whatſoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.*

CHAP.

CHAP. XI.

THIS chapter, in which St. *Paul* reproves the *Corinthians* for the diſorders committed at their religious meetings, conſiſts of two parts: I. In the firſt, he preſcribes the manner in which men and women ſhould behave in the church; he ordains that the men ſhould have their head uncovered, when ſpeaking of divine things; but that the women ſhould cover their head; and what he ſays is founded upon the rules of decency, which required that women ſhould not appear in public without being veiled, and their head covered, which was likewiſe the cuſtom of the *Jews*, and other people in that age. II. In the ſecond part, he reproves the *Corinthians* for their irreverence and diſorder in celebrating the Lord's Supper, after their feaſts of charity; and to induce them to correct thoſe abuſes, he relates the inſtitution of this ſacrament; he ſhews the uſe that ſhould be made of it, and tells the *Corinthians*, that it was for the puniſhment of their indevotion in the participation of it, that ſeveral of them were afflicted with ſickneſſes, and ſome were dead.

REFLECTIONS.

THE directions St. *Paul* gave the *Corinthians* upon what paſſed in their aſſemblies, inſtruct us in general, that order, gravity, and decency, ought to be obſerved in religious aſſemblies; and particularly that women ought to appear there with reſpect, and in ſuch a manner as may denote the ſubmiſſion, humility and modeſty proper to their ſex. In the next place, we ſhould make the moſt ſerious reflections upon what St. *Paul* ſays here, concerning the Lord's Supper, and its uſe: It appears by this chapter, I. That this Sacrament is a ſolemn inſtitution of our bleſſed Redeemer; and that, in the time of St. *Paul*, it was celebrated in all the Chriſtian churches. II. That the end for which *Chriſt* appointed this holy Supper,

was to be a memorial of his death, until his coming again at the laſt day. III. That we ought to celebrate this Sacrament with very great reverence; that we ſhould examine ourſelves before we come to it; that thoſe who do not ſo, and who partake of it unworthily, are guilty of a very criminal contempt of *Chriſt* himſelf, and eat and drink their own condemnation. IV. And laſtly, it is to be obſerved, that God puniſhed the abuſe of the Lord's Supper, in the time of the apoſtles, by ſickneſs and death; which plainly proves, that this Sacrament is a moſt holy inſtitution, and that thoſe who profane it, either by raſhneſs or hypocriſy, may expect a moſt ſevere condemnation.

CHAP. XII.

THE deſign of St. *Paul* in this chapter, is to inſtruct the *Corinthians* about the gifts of the Holy Ghoſt, and the uſe that is to be made of them, and to prevent diviſions in the church upon that account; for which purpoſe he does two things. I. He takes notice, that as they had renounced heathen idolatry, God had poured on them the gift of the Holy Spirit; that God granted to the miniſters of his church, and even to ſeveral of the believers of that time, divers extraordinary gifts; ſuch as the gift of inſtructing others, of ſpeaking and interpreting divers languages, of healing the ſick, of prophecy, and the like; that all theſe gifts proceeded from the ſame author; but that they were different, and that all thoſe who had received the ſpirit of God, did not poſſeſs the ſame gifts, nor in the ſame degree. II. He ſhews that theſe gifts proceeded all from the ſame Spirit, and ſince believers compoſed together but one body, they ought to be employed to the common advantage and edification of the church. This St. *Paul* illuſtrates by the compariſon of a human body; and obſerves, that although all the members have not the ſame functions, nor the ſame dignity, they are notwithſtanding all neceſſary, and do all contribute to the

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good of the body. By this St. *Paul* would convince the *Corinthians*, that theſe gifts of the Holy Ghoſt, which were given them for the public good, and to unite them to each other, ſhould not be the occaſion of diviſions among them.

REFLECTIONS.

THAT we may improve by this chapter, it muſt be obſerved, I. That the miraculous gifts which were formerly in the church, were an undeniable proof of the divinity of the Chriſtian Religion, and a very effectual means to confirm Chriſtians in the faith, and convert both *Jews* and Gentiles. For though theſe extraordinary gifts are not to be met with now, it appears from this chapter, that they were beſtowed by God on Chriſtians, in the time of the apoſtles, ſince St. *Paul* ſpeaks of them as a thing well known at that time by every body, and very common in the church. II. What St. *Paul* ſays of theſe miraculous gifts, we ſhould apply to the ordinary gifts of the ſpirit of God, and learn, that all ſpiritual gifts and graces proceed from the Holy Ghoſt; that God beſtows them upon men in a different degree, both for their own ſalvation, and the good of their brethren; and, as we compoſe but one body, we ought to apply all the gifts we have received to one and the ſame end, which is, to the common edification and benefit of the church, and to live in perfect union and harmony, each of us being contented with that meaſure of grace which God has been pleaſed to diſtribute to us, and poſſeſſing it with humility. Laſtly, St. *Paul* ſhews, that there are gifts more excellent, and more uſeful in their nature, than the miraculous ones before mentioned, namely, thoſe of true faith and charity, of which he treats in the following chapter; theſe are therefore the gifts which we ought moſt earneſtly to ſeek after.

CHAP. XIII.

I. ST. *Paul* having treated of miraculous and ſupernatural gifts, teaches, that how great and excellent ſoever theſe are, they are of no value without charity. II. He afterwards deſcribes the nature and characters of this virtue, proves that it prevents diviſions, jealouſies, pride, provoking one another, and ſuſpicions; and this he ſays, becauſe theſe vices reigned among the *Corinthians*. III. And laſtly, He ſhews, that charity is the chief of all virtues, becauſe miraculous gifts were not always to remain in the church, whereas charity is never to have an end, here nor hereafter.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter, which treats of charity, ought to be continually meditated on by all Chriſtians. St. *Paul* here ſhews the nature and excellency of this virtue. He proves the excellency of it on theſe two accounts: I. That without charity, that is to ſay, without a ſincere love of our neighbour, without a ſpirit of peace, unity, and meekneſs, all other gifts, even thoſe which are moſt excellent, ſuch as the gift of tongues and of miracles, are unprofitable, and worth nothing in the ſight of God. II. That this is a virtue which will laſt for ever, and which will render us perfect in heaven, as it does upon earth, whereas miraculous gifts ſhall ceaſe. The apoſtle inſtructs us next in the nature of charity. He ſays, that thoſe perſons who are endowed with this virtue, are neither envious nor haughty, nor ſuſpicious, nor ſelf-intereſted, nor peeviſh, nor quarrelſome; but that they are patient, meek, peaceable; that they judge charitable of their neighbour; that they do good; that they bear all things. This deſcription of charity, and its ſeveral effects, plainly proves that charity is the ſum of all other virtues, and the true way to diſcharge all the duties of Chriſtianity.

CHAP.

CHAP. XIV.

I. ST. *Paul* continues to ſpeak of miraculous gifts, and particularly of the gift of ſpeaking divers languages; and ſays, that of all ſpiritual gifts which God vouchſafed to particular perſons, that of prophecy, that is to ſay, the gift of teaching, exhorting, and explaining Scripture, was of moſt ſervice in the edification of the church. This he confirms, by obſerving how uſeleſs, and even abſurd it was, to ſpeak ſtrange languages, if thoſe who heard did not underſtand them. II. He orders next, that thoſe who ſpeak thoſe languages, or who had any revelation, ſhould proceed in order, and after one another, and that there ſhould always be ſomebody to interpret what they ſaid; he directs farther, that women ſhould keep ſilence in the church; and that all ſhould be done with decency and order.

REFLECTIONS.

THOUGH the gift of ſpeaking divers languages is ceaſed in the church, and there be no revelations at preſent, as there were in the time of the apoſtles, yet we may gather from this chapter the following important inſtructions: I. That theſe extraordinary gifts were, as St. *Paul* ſays, a ſtrong proof of the truth of the Goſpel. II. That however excellent ſuch gifts were, they were of no advantage, unleſs applied to the inſtruction and edification of the whole church, which ought always to be the great end of religion. III. That it is of the utmoſt moment, and abſolutely neceſſary, to communicate to the people a clear knowledge of the truths which God has revealed to us, and for that purpoſe, to explain the Scripture familiarly and intelligibly; that accordingly, the reading of the Bible, exhortations, prayers, pſalmody, celebration of divine ſervice, and in general, every thing that is done in the church, ought to be performed in a language which the common people underſtand, and

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in a plain and ſimple manner, and ſuited to every capacity. IV. And laſtly, We ought carefully to attend to the rule St. *Paul* lays down throughout this whole chapter, and particularly in the laſt verſe, where he ſays, that God is not a God of confuſion, but a God of order and peace; and that all things ought to be done in the church with decency, order, and gravity. It appears from hence, that what relates to the external part of religion, and the ſervice of God, is not a matter of indifference; and that it is the will of God, that order, decency, and uniformity be obſerved in all Chriſtian churches.

CHAP. XV. 1—34.

ST. *Paul* proves in this chapter the reſurrection of the dead, againſt certain perſons who denied this doctrine. For which purpoſe he lays down, I. That our Lord *Jeſus Chriſt* is riſen from the dead; which he proves by the teſtimony of the apoſtles, and ſeveral other perſons. II. He infers from thence, that the dead ſhall riſe again, which he illuſtrates and confirms by ſeveral other arguments.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter is an excellent diſcourſe, in which the doctrine of the reſurrection is fully explained. St. *Paul* teaches us, I. That the whole Chriſtian Religion is founded upon the reſurrection of *Jeſus Chriſt*, and that this reſurrection is a certain and undoubted fact, atteſted by the apoſtles themſelves, whoſe evidence cannot be queſtioned. II. St. *Paul* ſhews, that the dead will infallibly riſe again, and the proofs alledged by him are the following: That if the dead were not to be raiſed, *Chriſt* would not have riſen, and our faith would be vain; that the faithful, who are dead in the Lord, would periſh for ever; that Chriſtians would be the moſt miſerable of all men, by reaſon of the perſecutions to which they were expoſed; and that the evil which *Adam* has brought upon us by ſubjecting

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us to death, would not otherwiſe be remedied. He farther obſerves, that *Chriſt* could not be ſaid fully to reign over all things, if by raiſing us he did not deſtroy death, which is our laſt enemy; and finally, that if there was no ſuch thing as the reſurrection, it would be a great folly for Chriſtians voluntarily to expoſe themſelves to all the evils which they did undergo. All theſe conſiderations prove the certainty of the reſurrection at the laſt day; and let us return thanks to God for having built the hopes of our reſurrection upon ſuch a ſure foundation; and labour to be confirmed more and more in this hope; taking heed, as St. *Paul* exhorts, that the words and examples of the impious and profane do not ſtagger our faith, and ſtudying to live a holy and unblameable life.

CHAP. XV. 35—58.

ST. *Paul*, after having proved the reſurrection of the dead, ſhews, I. That although our bodies are deſtroyed by death, they will be reſtored to life, and that then they will be no longer corruptible, weak, and mortal, as they now are, but incorruptible, immortal, and glorious; which he explains by the compariſon of grain that is ſown, and by ſome other reſemblances. II. He ſpeaks next of the change that will happen to thoſe who ſhall be living at the time of the reſurrection. And, III. concludes, by deſcribing thoſe ſentiments of joy and piety, which the belief of the reſurrection ought to inſpire all true Chriſtians with.

REFLECTIONS.

ST. *Paul*'s deſign is, to teach us, that although death deſtroys our bodies, and reduces them to duſt, they will nevertheleſs be raiſed again by the almighty power of our Lord; and that the bodies thus raiſed, will be incorruptible and glorious, inſomuch that true believers ſhall all be then like *Jeſus Chriſt*. Beſides this, we ſee that thoſe who ſhall be alive at the end of the

the world, will be changed in an inſtant; and that accordingly all the faithful will become immortal. The expectation of this great glory, which is reſerved for us, ought to fill us with hope and joy; to diſſipate entirely the terrors of death, and to make us ſay with St. *Paul, O death, where is thy ſting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.* But the hope of this reſurrection of our bodies, does likewiſe oblige us to preſerve them in great purity, and to practiſe continually all the duties of Chriſtianity; this is what St. *Paul* exhorts us to do in theſe words, which ſhew the uſe we ſhould make of this doctrine: *Be ye ſtedfaſt, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; foraſmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.*

CHAP. XVI.

I. THE apoſtle exhorts the *Corinthians* to contribute to a collection that was making for the churches of *Judea.* II. He promiſes to come to ſee them in a little time. III. He recommends to them *Timothy,* and ſome other perſons. IV. He concludes with ſalutations and good wiſhes, and by declaring, that thoſe who did not love the Lord *Jeſus Chriſt* ſincerely, were expoſed to the judgment of God, and ought not to be looked upon as members of the church.

REFLECTIONS.

I. WE are to obſerve, in the firſt part of this chapter, St. *Paul*'s exhortations to the *Corinthians,* to engage them to aſſiſt the churches of *Judea,* for which there was a collection making, and to lay apart ſomething on that account every firſt day of the week. This is a leſſon to us, that every one ought to give alms according to his ability, as often as there is a proper occaſion; and that the firſt day of the week, or Sunday, was, from that time particularly dedicated to works of piety and charity. II. The manner

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in which St. *Paul* recommends *Timothy*, and ſome other zealous and godly perſons, teaches us, that we ought to have in great reverence the true miniſters of the Lord, who have devoted themſelves to his ſervice, and ſubmit to them. III. The ſalutations we read at the end of this epiſtle, ſhew, that there ought to be a moſt ſtrict communion among the churches and Chriſtians of all parts, leading them to love one another affectionately; and eſpecially that God's miniſters ought to pray without ceaſing for all the faithful, wiſhing them an increaſe of the grace of our Lord and Saviour *Jeſus Chriſt*. Finally, We ought to give a very particular attention to the anathema which St. *Paul* denounces againſt all thoſe that do not love *Chriſt* ſincerely. He threatens them with a curſe of God, and forbids us to look upon ſuch as Chriſtians. This denotes plainly, that it is the duty of the Church to excommunicate ſcandalous and profane perſons; and that all ſuch as have not a true love for our Saviour, and who neglect to keep his commandments, do by no means belong to him, but remain under the curſe of God.

The End of the firſt Epiſtle of St. PAUL *to the* CORINTHIANS.

THE

THE

SECOND EPISTLE OF ST. PAUL

TO THE

CORINTHIANS.

ARGUMENT.

This ſecond Epiſtle of St. Paul *to the* Corinthians, *was writ about the fifty-ſixth year of our Lord. The principal deſign of the apoſtle in this Epiſtle, is to defend his miniſtry againſt thoſe who diſparaged it among the* Corinthians.

CHAP. I.

AFTER the ſalutation, St. *Paul* ſpeaks in this chapter, I. Of the perſecutions he had been expoſed to in *Aſia*, at *Epheſus*, and from which God had delivered him by a kind of miracle. II. He tells the *Corinthians*, in the next place, that if he had not come to ſee them, as he had promiſed, it did not proceed from levity or inconſtancy, or want of kindneſs towards them; but that he had delayed his journey, that he might not be obliged to reprove and chaſtiſe them for the diſorders that prevailed in their church.

REFLEC-

REFLECTIONS *after reading the chapter.*

WHAT St. *Paul* ſays in the beginning of this epiſtle of his ſufferings, as well as of the aſſiſtance and comfort which God had afforded him under them, teaches us. I. That the faithful are ſometimes expoſed to great dangers, and extreme afflictions, but that God ſupports and ſtrengthens them in ſuch a ſtate, and at length graciouſly delivers them. II. That theſe afflictions produce very happy effects, not only in the joy of thoſe who are afflicted, but likewiſe in the edification of their brethren; ſince thoſe who have thus ſuffered, are better able to comfort and encourage others in any trouble or affliction. III. As St. *Paul* always deſires to be aſſiſted with the prayers of the *Corinthians*, we have reaſon to conclude that the mutual prayers of the faithful do greatly contribute to obtain from God deliverance from danger, comfort, and all the graces we ſtand in need of. The ſecond part of this chapter ſuggeſts two remarks upon St. *Paul*'s conduct. I. The ſincerity of his behaviour towards the *Corinthians* in particular; and, II. His meekneſs and prudence in deferring his journey to them, that he might ſpare them. Such ſhould be the character of *Chriſt*'s miniſters. As the maſter whom they profeſs to ſerve is love and truth itſelf, they ought to behave with ſincerity and candour, and particularly to avoid every thing that ſavours of levity and inconſtancy, that ſo they may thereby approve themſelves both to God and man. And on the other hand, to ſpare ſinners as much as they can, giving them time to repent, and never making uſe of ſeverity till it becomes abſolutely neceſſary, and cannot be avoided.

CHAP. II.

I. ST. *Paul* tells the *Corinthians*, that it was to ſpare them, and that he might not have the ſorrow of reproving them for their irregularities, that he forbore going to *Corinth*; and he orders them to receive into the

the peace of the church the inceſtuous perſon that had been excommunicated, mentioned in the former Epiſtle, becauſe he had repented. II. He acquaints them with ſome of his travels, and upon that occaſion ſpeaks of the efficacy and fruits of his miniſtry.

REFLECTIONS.

I. ST. *Paul* ſhews in this chapter the moſt tender regard for the *Corinthians*, and great charity even to that enormous ſinner whom he had delivered to Satan, but who had afterwards repented. Theſe kind and affectionate ſentiments of St. *Paul*, may ſerve for a rule to paſtors, and inſpire them with a tender love for their flocks, and particularly for the greateſt ſinners. It is matter of great grief to the miniſters of *Chriſt*, when they are forced to uſe ſeverity, and the greateſt joy when they obſerve ſinners returning from the error of their ways. After the apoſtle had reproved the church of *Corinth* for not excommunicating the inceſtuous perſon, and had actually excommunicated him himſelf, he orders him again to be received into the church, and to be forgiven, becauſe the puniſhment had worked a thorough repentance and reformation in him. This is that juſt mixture of ſeverity and candour, which ſhould be obſerved in the exerciſe of diſcipline, not ſuffering ſcandalous offenders to continue in communion with the church, but at the ſame time being ready to receive them again with joy and gladneſs, as ſoon as they are humbled, and have given ſufficient proofs of their reformation. II. St. *Paul*'s thankfulneſs to God for the glorious ſucceſs of his miniſtry, is a proof of his humility as well as of his great zeal. The true miniſters of *Chriſt* have no greater joy, than that of making known the will of God to men; and always attribute to God alone, and to the efficacy of his grace, the good ſucceſs they meet with. III. The laſt verſes of this chapter teach us, that the preaching of the Goſpel does not produce the ſame effect in all; that it is to ſome a ſavour of death,

death, that is to ſay, an occaſion of condemnation, ſince by rejecting this Goſpel they become more wicked, and aggravate their puniſhment; but to others it is a ſavour of life, that is to ſay, an efficacious means to bring them to a ſpiritual life, and to ſalvation.

CHAP. III.

I. ST. *Paul* repreſents to the *Corinthians*, that their converſion to the Chriſtian Religion was a ſufficient proof of his calling, and that he ſtood in need of no other recommendation to them, than the teſtimony of their conſcience, and the gifts of the holy Spirit, which had been beſtowed on them abundantly; but he acknowledges at the ſame time, that the efficacy of his miniſtry proceeded only from God. II. He ſhews in the next place, that the miniſtry of the Goſpel is much more excellent than that of the law, foraſmuch as this laſt was imperfect, incapable of giving life, and was not to continue always; whereas that of the Goſpel was ſpiritual and eternal, giving life. From whence St. *Paul* concludes, that thoſe who adhered to the ceremonies and law of *Moſes*, remained in ignorance and miſery; and that none but thoſe who cleave to the Goſpel are truly enlightened, and enjoy the glorious liberty of the Sons of God. The apoſtle ſays all this to defend himſelf againſt certain teachers that oppoſed him, and made a ſhew of great zeal for the law of *Moſes*.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter teaches us, I. That the greateſt glory of the miniſters of *Jeſus Chriſt*, and what recommends them in the ſight of God and man, is the fruits of their preaching, and the ſhare they have in the love and affection of Chriſtians. II. That they ought not to preſume on their own ſtrength, nor aſcribe to themſelves the ſucceſs of their miniſtry; but that the honour of it is due to God alone. III. That the Goſpel is much more excellent than the law, and its miniſtry

miniſtry infinitely more glorious than that of *Moſes*, ſince the Chriſtian Doctrine gives us a much more perfect knowledge of the will of God by *Jeſus Chriſt*, making us partakers of the true liberty and glory of the Lord himſelf, by ſanctifying our natures, and giving us a ſure and joyful hope of immortality. From whence it follows, that if there be any who do not believe, it proceeds from wilful blindneſs; that we ought to eſteem this Goſpel above all things, and that thoſe who preach it, and thoſe who make profeſſion of it, ought to do it openly and ſincerely, and without ſhame, as St. *Paul* will ſhew us in the following chapter.

CHAP. IV.

I. THE apoſtle continues to ſpeak of his courage and ſincerity in the exerciſe of his miniſtry; but obſerves, that there were ſome who did not believe the Goſpel, wilfully ſhutting their eyes againſt that divine light which ſhould guide them. II. He ſays farther, that he himſelf, and other miniſters, being weak men, the efficacy of their preaching did not proceed from themſelves, but came from God alone. He mentions likewiſe, the perſecutions and ſufferings to which he was expoſed; and ſays, that faith in *Chriſt*, the hopes of the reſurrection, and the firm expectation of eternal glory, made him not loſe courage, but undergo all theſe evils with perſeverance, and even with joy.

REFLECTIONS.

THE conſiderations which occur to us here, are the following: I. That the miniſters of *Jeſus Chriſt* ought to put away all artifice and diſſimulation, and to ſpeak always freely and ſincerely, as in the preſence of God, ſeeking only to make manifeſt the truth in the conſciences of all men. II. That if there are any who are not ſanctified and enlightened by the Goſpel, but remain in unbelief, it is wholly their own fault, becauſe the love of this world has blinded them. III. That the ſervants of God, and all Chriſtians, ought to

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bear with courage the ſevereſt afflictions, ſince they tend to the edification of the church, and ſince we know that thoſe who partake of the ſufferings of *Jeſus Chriſt*, ſhall likewiſe partake of his reſurrection, life and glory. IV. That the afflictions of this life can only hurt the body, but give new life and vigour to the ſoul; that they are but light, and of ſhort duration, and work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. But if we would make all this advantage of afflictions, and not ſink under them, we muſt judge of afflictions by the light of faith, not looking at the things which are ſeen, and are temporal, but at the things which are not ſeen, which are eternal.

CHAP. V.

I. THE apoſtle continues the diſcourſe he had begun concerning the afflictions he underwent, and comfort he received from the hope of the reſurrection and a better life; he ſpeaks of the happineſs which the faithful ſhall enjoy after death; and ſays, that the conſideration of that happineſs, and of the laſt judgment, made him earneſtly deſire to leave this world, to be with the Lord; and that in this expectation, he ſuffered afflictions with courage, and laboured to become acceptable to God, by faithfully diſcharging his duty. II. He begins again to diſcourſe about his miniſtry, and ſays, that his only aim was to bring men to the faith; which he thought a ſufficient proof of the honour of his apoſtleſhip againſt his adverſaries; adding, that the love of *Jeſus Chriſt*, who died for all men, was a ſtrong motive to him, to live only for the edification of the faithful. Laſtly, He declares, he had no regard to external things, ſuch as the advantages which the *Jews* enjoyed over the Gentiles, and ſo much boaſted of. And that as God had united both *Jews* and Gentiles, reconciling all men in *Chriſt Jeſus*, he had no other deſign in his miniſtry than to bring men to God, and make them become new creatures.

REFLEC-

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter contains very comfortable and uſeful inſtructions. We ſee here, I. That the faithful know and believe aſſuredly, that though the body be deſtroyed by death, yet there is another more happy ſtate, and never-fading glory, prepared for them; and that when they leave this body they will be with the Lord. This hope, full of comfort and glory, ſupports them in their afflictions and trials, and continually animates them to a holy life. II. St. *Paul* teaches us in this chapter, that *We muſt all appear before the judgment-ſeat of Chriſt, that every one may receive according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad;* and ſhews, that the uſe to be made of this doctrine is, to live in the fear of the Lord, ſtudying to render ourſelves acceptable to him at all times and in all places, and to inſpire others with the ſame ſentiments. III. The apoſtle propoſes another very powerful motive to the diſcharge of theſe duties, when he adds, that the great love which *Chriſt* has ſhewn us, in dying for our ſalvation, is a moſt preſſing argument, if we underſtand it rightly, to live no longer to ourſelves, but to employ our whole life for the edification of our brethren, and to the glory of him who died and roſe again for us. Laſtly, Since the deſign of the miniſtry of the Goſpel is, as St. *Paul* teaches, to make men become new creatures, and to reconcile them to God by *Jeſus Chriſt;* all thoſe who pretend to call themſelves Chriſtians, ought to ſet a high value upon this Goſpel, and zealouſly improve the means which God offers them to be reconciled with him, and to endeavour to wean themſelves from the things of this world, to become new creatures, by regeneration and a conſtant application to holineſs.

CHAP.

CHAP. VI.

To which add the firſt verſe of Chap. VII.

THIS chapter conſiſts of two parts: I. The apoſtle ſays, that he had endeavoured to diſcharge his miniſtry with integrity, zeal, charity, and patience, in the midſt of the afflictions and diſgraces to which he had been expoſed; and he conjures the *Corinthians* to make ſuitable returns to his great zeal and fervent love towards them. II. He exhorts them to imitate his zeal and ſincerity, by making a pure profeſſion of Chriſtianity, avoiding all intercourſe with idolators, either by marriage, or by being preſent at their worſhip, and partaking of their feaſts; and by becoming pure both in body and ſoul.

REFLECTIONS.

I. WE have in this chapter a remarkable deſcription of thoſe virtues which ought to adorn the miniſters of the Goſpel. St. *Paul* teaches them, by his own example, to diſcharge their office with fidelity; to behave in ſuch a manner, as to give no offence; nor to diſhonour their miniſtry, but to make it honourable by the purity of their life, by a ſincere and open profeſſion of the truth, by a perfect charity, by meekneſs, by humility and patience in affliction. Theſe are the virtues which do honour to the miniſters of *Chriſt*, and add great weight to the Goſpel they preach. II. We learn in the ſecond place, that as paſtors ought entirely to devote themſelves to the ſervice of the church, and be full of tender love for thoſe committed to their charge, ſo theſe ought to make ſuitable returns, and to love them no leſs ſincerely in the Lord. III. As St. *Paul* forbids the *Corinthians* to have to do with idolators, ſo neither is it lawful for Chriſtians to aſſociate themſelves with carnal men, and to join a worldly life to the profeſſion of the Goſpel. Becauſe there can be no agreement between righteouſneſs and

unrighteouſneſs, between light and darkneſs; we ought therefore to avoid correſpondence with worldly men, to withdraw ourſelves from them, and to have no ſhare in their ſins; *to cleanſe ourſelves from all defilement of fleſh and ſpirit, perfecting holineſs in the fear of God.* This we are engaged to by the great and precious promiſes God has made us of being our God and father, and looking upon us as his people, his children, and heirs of the promiſes.

CHAP. VII.

I. ST. *Paul* exhorts the *Corinthians* to entertain the ſame affection for him as he had for them. II. He expreſſes his great joy at hearing, by *Titus*, the effect of his Epiſtle with reſpect to the inceſtuous perſon; from whence he takes occaſion to ſpeak of the nature and effects of true repentance.

REFLECTIONS.

WE muſt make the following remarks upon this chapter: I. That there ought to be a great love, and mutual tenderneſs between paſtors and their flocks; ſuch for inſtance as St. *Paul* had conceived for the *Corinthians*, and which he wiſhed they might have for him. II. The manner of the *Corinthians* receiving *Titus*, and the effect which St. *Paul*'s reproofs produced in them, teach us, that churches ought to receive with love and confidence the faithful miniſters of the Lord, and ſubmit to their corrections and remonſtrances. III. St. *Paul*'s great joy upon *Titus*'s informing him of the happy ſtate of the church of *Corinth*, ſhews, that the greateſt happineſs paſtors can enjoy, is to ſee the good effects of their miniſtry, and have proofs of their peoples affection. Laſtly, This chapter inſtructs us in the nature of true repentance. St. *Paul* ſays, there is a worldly ſorrow, a ſorrow which is owing to the love of the world, and a regard to things temporal, which is not attended with a ſincere change, and only produces death; whereas

whereas godly ſorrow is attended with peace, and unſpeakable comfort, and produces the moſt happy effects; ſince it fills thoſe who are affected with it with a lively ſorrow, and juſt indignation againſt themſelves, inſpiring them with fear and zeal, and leading them to repair, as much as poſſible, the evil they have done.

CHAP. VIII.

I. THE apoſtle informs the *Corinthians* of the liberality which the churches of *Macedonia* had ſhewn in a collection made for the churches of *Jeruſalem*. II. He exhorts them to imitate their example, and finiſh the collection which had been begun the year before; and tells them, that he ſent them for that purpoſe *Titus*, and another perſon, which was probably St. *Luke*.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter furniſhes us with divers inſtructions about alms: I. The firſt is, that Chriſtians are obliged to exerciſe charity as often as they meet with an occaſion, and are able to do it, eſpecially when it is to aſſiſt their brethren. St. *Paul* ſays upon this ſubject, that perſons who have devoted themſelves to God, and are well inſtructed in the grace of our Lord *Jeſus Chriſt*, do always diſcharge this duty with pleaſure. II. The example of the churches of *Macedonia*, which the apoſtle propoſes to the *Corinthians*, ſhews, that ſuch as exerciſe charity do very great ſervice, ſince they not only relieve the neceſſitous, but likewiſe ſet a good pattern to the whole church, and ſtir up others to imitate the ſame. III. That in works of charity, God regards chiefly the readineſs and good will with which it is performed. IV. That charity ought to be done in a juſt proportion, ſo that every one may contribute according to his power, and that ſome be not more burdened than others; and that it is but reaſonable that thoſe who have been

relieved, should likewise assist others in their turn. V. And lastly, the great precaution that St. *Paul* uses in the distribution of collections, that nobody might blame him, and the care he takes to put them into the hands of faithful and approved persons, shew, that we ought to administer charity with a very great integrity and prudence; and that they who have the care of distributing the alms of the faithful, ought to do it in such a manner as to leave no room for reproach, nor even, if possible, for the least suspicion.

CHAP. IX.

I. ST. *Paul* continues to exhort the *Corinthians* to assist the churches of *Judea*, and to do it bountifully and freely. II. And that he may engage them to this duty, he sets before them the blessing that charitable persons are to expect from God; and the good effects which the exercise of charity produces, to the glory of God, and the edification of the church.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter treats of alms and charity as well as the foregoing, and the apostle proposes here particularly three things, *viz.* The manner of giving alms; the reward of the charitable; and the good effects that charity produces. I. As to the manner, St. *Paul* says, that in order to please God, we must give as much as we are able, with chearfulness and liberality, because *God loves a chearful giver*. II. The promises he makes the *Corinthians*, do not suffer us to doubt but God will reward the beneficent and charitable, even with temporal blessings, by increasing their substance in such a manner, that they may always have not only what is necessary for themselves, but likewise sufficient to assist such as are in want. III. We ought likewise seriously to consider the good effects which charity produces; it rejoices the saints, comforts the afflicted, engages them to praise God, edifies

edifies the church, and gives many people, ſeeing the liberality of Chriſtians, occaſion to glorify God's holy name, to pray for the charitable perſons, and to imitate them; all which contributes greatly to promote the Goſpel. Theſe conſiderations ſhould ſtir us up to charity; and it is particularly the duty of thoſe to whom God has given the good things of this life, to improve what St. *Paul* ſays in this and the foregoing chapter.

CHAP. X.

THE deſign of St. *Paul* in this chapter and the following, is to defend himſelf againſt thoſe who endeavoured to leſſen his authority, and to render him contemptible to the *Corinthians*. It is with this view he ſpeaks, I. Of the ſpiritual power God had given him, and the uſe he made of it for the edification of the church. II. He then declares, that he was not full of pride, like thoſe who ſpoke evil of him; that he did not pretend to meddle with other mens labours, nor take the honour of them to himſelf; but was contented with that proportion of grace which God had beſtowed on him; and moreover, that he hoped, as he had firſt preached the Goſpel at *Corinth*, he ſhould likewiſe go and preach it in diſtant countries, where it had not yet been preached.

REFLECTIONS.

THE care that St. *Paul* takes to juſtify and defend himſelf againſt ſuch as blamed him, and what he ſays concerning his authority, and the ſpiritual power God had given him, ſhews, that it is lawful to maintain one's innocence, provided it be done with moderation, and for a good end. It proves, particularly, that although the ſervants of God ought to be entirely free from pride, yet they are allowed, and even obliged to aſſert the honour of their miniſtry; to make uſe of the authority they have received from *Chriſt* agreeable to his intentions; reſolutely withſtanding

ſtanding all thoſe who would obſtruct the edification of the church, and having in view, not their own glory or intereſt, but the promoting God's kingdom, the removing every thing that may oppoſe the knowledge of him, and the engaging mens hearts to the obedience of *Chriſt*. We are alſo taught hereby, that Chriſtians ought to reverence their paſtors, and ſubmit to their authority, ſince they likewiſe have their commiſſion from *Jeſus Chriſt*; and though they are much inferior to the apoſtles, yet the Lord has appointed them to rule his church. Laſtly, The manner in which St. *Paul* ſpeaks of himſelf, and the remarks he makes upon the pride of thoſe teachers who oppoſed him, ſhould make us own, that humility is the character of the true miniſters of *Chriſt*, that they ought to confine themſelves within the bounds of their vocation, and the duties to which they are called; and that it is a great misfortune to the church, when its miniſters are animated with a ſpirit of pride, preſumption, envy, and jealouſy; and when they occaſion ſtrife and diviſions.

CHAP. XI.

I. ST. *Paul* tells the *Corinthians*, that the great love he had for them, and his fear leſt they ſhould be ſeduced by thoſe who endeavoured to villify him, compelled him to make mention, though againſt his will, of the gifts and graces wherewith God had enriched him, and of what he had done for them. II. He puts them in mind, that he had preached the Goſpel to them without receiving any thing from them; which was more than the falſe apoſtles could ſay: that ſo he might not give them the leaſt occaſion againſt him. III. He ſhews, that he might boaſt of his ſuperiority over thoſe falſe apoſtles, who were *Jews*, on account of his great labours and ſufferings, of which he gives us here a very remarkable catalogue,

REFLECTIONS.

WE may obſerve in general in this chapter that St. *Paul* maintains the honour of his apoſtleſhip, but does it in a very humble manner; and that though he ſpeaks in his own praiſe, yet his manner of doing it ſufficiently ſhews that he was forced to it. From hence we may conclude, I. That we ought always to ſpeak of ourſelves with great modeſty; that modeſty and humility ought particularly to be found in the miniſters of *Jeſus Chriſt*; but that they may nevertheleſs aſſert their own innocency, and the honour of their miniſtry, when it is neceſſary for public edification. II. St. *Paul*'s fear leſt the *Corinthians* ſhould ſuffer themſelves to be drawn aſide from the purity and ſimplicity of the Goſpel by falſe teachers, and his obſerving that the miniſters of Satan transform themſelves into angels of light, is a warning to Chriſtians to be upon their guard, and carefully to diſtinguiſh doctrines and the propagators of them, and not ſuffer themſelves to be ſurprized by the falſe appearances of piety and zeal. III. We have ſeen that St. *Paul* would receive no ſtipend from the *Corinthians*, though he loved them, and was beloved by them; this he did to take away every pretence from thoſe who ſought occaſion to render his conduct ſuſpected, and to ſhew that he was not like the falſe apoſtles, who railed at him, and were themſelves mercenary. This is an example of zeal, prudence, and diſintereſtedneſs, which ought to be imitated by all paſtors, and adds great weight to their miniſtry, and to all their offices. IV. We ſhould ſeriouſly attend to the account which the apoſtle here gives of his great ſufferings, and of the many dangers and perſecutions he had been expoſed to, and from which God had delivered him. This is a noble proof of his zeal and ſincerity, and of the truth of the doctrine he preached; it likewiſe ſhews, that Chriſtians ought not to be terrified at afflictions, eſpecially the miniſters of *Jeſus Chriſt*.

Chriſt. Laſtly, St. *Paul* informs us, that beſides the ſufferings he endured in his own perſon, he was continually in care for the churches; and that no evil could befal them, but what afflicted, and as it were conſumed him. Such is the ſpirit of all true paſtors in the duties of the miniſtry; the care of ſouls, and the ſeveral wants of the people, engage their attention and their concern night and day, and they are more earneſt in promoting the edification of the church than in any other thing.

CHAP. XII.

I. ST. *Paul* continues to ſpeak of the advantages that diſtinguiſhed him from other miniſters: relates how he was caught up to heaven; but does it in an exceeding humble and modeſt manner; by which it appears, he would not have mentioned it, if he had not been as it were forced to it. II. After this he tells the *Corinthians* he would ſhortly come to them; and as he had not been, ſo neither would he now be burthenſome to them; he expreſſes a moſt tender regard for them, declaring he would not have writ to them as he did, but for their edification, and that he might not be obliged to uſe them with ſeverity when he came to *Corinth.*

REFLECTIONS.

ST. *Paul*'s being caught up into heaven, mentioned in this chapter, was a glorious privilege of this apoſtle, demonſtrating the divinity of his vocation, and at the ſame time, that there is a glorious and immortal life prepared for the faithful in heaven. The way in which St. *Paul* relates this matter, and the excuſes he makes in giving the relation of it, ſhew, that we may be allowed to ſpeak of the favours God has beſtowed on us; but that we muſt not do it unleſs it be neceſſary for the glory of God, and always in an humble ſenſe of our own unworthineſs, but by no means in a way of boaſting or extolling ourſelves.

ourſelves. The apoſtle ſays, God has put a thorn in his fleſh, that he might not be puffed up on account of the revelations he had had when he was caught up into paradiſe; and that a bad angel did, by the divine permiſſion, cauſe him to feel very ſenſible pains in his body; this teaches us, that we are in danger of growing proud when we enjoy any conſiderable advantage; and that it is neceſſary God ſhould viſit even the beſt of men with afflictions, to mortify them and keep them humble. We have ſeen, that though St. *Paul* prayed earneſtly to be delivered from this affliction, yet the Lord did not anſwer his requeſt, and ſaid unto him, *My grace is ſufficient for thee.* God never fails to grant thoſe who aſk of him thoſe things which are neceſſary for the good of the ſoul, and to obtain ſalvation; but he does not always hear the prayers in which we beg to be delivered from bodily evils; but his grace, which enables us to bear them, ought to ſatisfy us; and he leaves us expoſed to ſufferings, to the end we may become more ſenſible of his ſtrength in our weakneſs. Laſtly, St. *Paul* expreſſes the tender and paternal affection he bore to the *Corinthians*: he had nothing in view but their edification; he was ready to lay down his life for them; and was afraid he muſt be forced to uſe with ſeverity thoſe who had not repented. Such are the ſentiments of all faithful paſtors; they have a tender affection for their people, devote themſelves wholly to their ſervice, and it is always matter of grief to them to be forced to uſe the ſeverity of eccleſiaſtical cenſures againſt ſcandalous and incorrigible ſinners.

CHAP. XIII.

I. THE apoſtle acquaints the *Corinthians* again that he deſigned to viſit them; that he would not ſpare thoſe who had not amended their lives; and ſince ſome among them queſtioned his authority, he would make them know by experience, and by the effects, that as *Jeſus Chriſt*, though he had been a weak

a weak man, now reigned by the power God, ſo likewiſe he himſelf, though he was looked upon as a weak and a deſpicable perſon, yet had received from the Lord the power and authority of an apoſtle of *Chriſt*. II. He exhorts them to examine and correct themſelves, telling them he deſired nothing ſo much as to find them in a good condition, that he might not be obliged to deal rigorouſly with them, though they ſhould call in queſtion his character as an apoſtle. III. He concludes with a general exhortation to amendment and peace, and with hearty prayers for them.

REFLECTIONS.

We may obſerve in this chapter the zeal, and at the ſame time the meekneſs, charity, and humility of St. *Paul*. This apoſtle was reſolved not to ſpare the incorrigible; yet he wiſhed the *Corinthians* might amend, and not force him to uſe the power he had received from *Chriſt* as an apoſtle. In imitation of him, the miniſters of *Chriſt* ought to be animated with a ſpirit of charity and humility, and, as much as they can, to uſe meekneſs inſtead of ſeverity. Nevertheleſs, they ought not to ſpare hardened ſinners, when neceſſity requires it. It appears likewiſe from hence, that it is more laudable and pleaſing to God, that Chriſtians ſhould do their duty willingly, and of their own accord, than to be compelled thereto by the ſevereſt cenſures of the church. St. *Paul* concludes this Epiſtle, exhorting the *Corinthians* to ſpiritual joy, to repentance and peace, in theſe expreſſions: *Finally, brethren, farewell; be ye perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace be with you.* This is the ſtate which all Chriſtians ought to aſpire after, and be confirmed in more and more; and this too is the way to partake of God's love, of his peace, and of the effects of his mercy in *Jeſus Chriſt* our Lord.

The end of the Second Epiſtle of St. PAUL *to the* CORINTHIANS.

THE

THE

EPISTLE OF ST. PAUL

TO THE

GALATIANS.

ARGUMENT.

In the Epiſtle to the Galatians, *which was writ about the year of our Lord fifty-two, St.* Paul *oppoſes thoſe who taught, that in order to be ſaved, it was not enough to believe in* Jeſus Chriſt, *but it was likewiſe neceſſary to be circumciſed, and to obſerve the ceremonies of the law of* Moſes. *The apoſtle proves againſt theſe people, that Chriſtians are juſtified by faith alone in* Jeſus Chriſt, *without being obliged to the obſervation of thoſe ceremonies. He afterwards exhorts the* Galatians *to continue in that liberty; but warns them not to abuſe it, by falling into licentiouſneſs.*

CHAP. I.

I. IN this firſt chapter St. *Paul*, after the ſalutation, reproves the *Galatians* for departing from the doctrine which he had taught them, which was the only doctrine they ought to receive. II. He tells them in the next place, that he had received this doctrine

trine by the revelation of *Jeſus Chriſt*, and not from any man; upon which occaſion he puts them in mind how zealous he had been formerly for the ceremonies and traditions of the *Jews:* that he had even been a furious perſecutor of the Chriſtians, but that God had called him to the knowledge of the truth; and that immediately after his converſion, he had preached the Goſpel in ſeveral places, without conſulting any man, or any apoſtle. St. *Paul* ſpeaks thus, to ſhew that he was called by *Chriſt* only, and not by St. *Peter*, nor by any other perſon; and that he had the ſame authority as the reſt of the apoſtles, which the falſe teachers would not allow.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter preſents us with two principal reflections. I. That Chriſtians ought never to depart from the true doctrine of the Goſpel, which was preached and committed to writing by the apoſtles; and that they ought to ſhun all thoſe that would preach another doctrine, or propoſe any way to be ſaved but by faith in *Chriſt Jeſus*. II. The account St. *Paul* gives of his converſion, and what he ſays to prove that he had his authority from *Jeſus Chriſt*, obliges us, on one hand, to receive his doctrine as divine, and to ſubmit to it; and, on the other, to acknowledge the mercy of the Lord, and the power of his grace, towards thoſe who are in ignorance and error; of which we ſee an illuſtrious example in the converſion of St. *Paul*, and his being called to the office of an apoſtle, who, before that, had been a declared enemy of the Chriſtian Religion.

CHAP. II.

I. ST. *Paul*, to ſupport his calling and authority, and to ſhew that he was not inferior to any of the apoſtles, ſays, that not only his doctrine had been approved at *Jeruſalem* by St. *Peter*, St. *James*, and St. *John;* but even that he had rebuked St. *Peter*, becauſe

out

out of too great complaiſance for the *Jews*, he was afraid to eat with thoſe Gentiles who had embraced the Goſpel of *Chriſt*; which might have encouraged the *Jews* in their prejudices, and have given ſome reaſon to believe that the Gentiles were bound to ſubmit to the ceremonies of the law of *Moſes*. II. He teaches next, that both *Jews* and Gentiles are juſtified only by faith in *Jeſus Chriſt*; but ſhews, at the ſame time, that this doctrine is ſo far from countenancing looſeneſs of life, that, on the contrary, faith in *Chriſt* crucified withdraws men from ſin, and engages them to lead a moſt ſpiritual life.

REFLECTIONS.

We have the two following obſervations to make upon this chapter: I. The authority, ſincerity, and zeal, with which St. *Paul* preached the pure doctrine of the Goſpel, ſo far as even to reprove St. *Peter* for his too great complaiſance to the *Jews*, which induced him to avoid all correſpondence with the Gentiles. This ſhould convince all Chriſtians, and eſpecially the miniſters of the Goſpel, that they ſhould act agreeable to their calling, and to walk with uprightneſs, according to the truth; and that we ought never to uſe any ſubterfuges, or the leaſt diſſimulation in matters of religion. II. St. *Paul* eſtabliſhes in this chapter the doctrine of juſtification by faith alone in *Jeſus Chriſt*; but he teaches, at the ſame time, and very expreſsly too, that this doctrine does by no means authoriſe men to live in ſin; that, on the contrary, the true faith by which we are juſtified does neceſſarily deſtroy ſin in us, and cauſe us to live to God. This is what St. *Paul* teaches us in theſe excellent words, which ſo well deſcribe the condition and ſentiments of a true believer in *Jeſus Chriſt*; *I am crucified with Chriſt: nevertheleſs, I live; yet not I, but Chriſt liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the fleſh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himſelf for me.*

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

ST. *Paul* blames the *Galatians* for departing from that doctrine they had before embraced, and which teaches, that men are juſtified by faith in *Chriſt* without the works of the law; and to ſhew that that was the only true doctrine, he puts them in mind, I. That when they received it, God was pleaſed to communicate to them the miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghoſt. II. He proves, by the example of *Abraham*, by the nature of the promiſes which were made to him and his poſterity, and by the curſe which the law denounces againſt thoſe that ſhould not perfectly fulfil it, that all men, even the Gentiles themſelves, muſt be juſtified by faith in *Chriſt*; from whence it follows, that thoſe who pretended to be juſtified by the law, deprived themſelves of theſe promiſes, and continued under the curſe. III. He confirms the ſame, by obſerving that the law of *Moſes*, which was not given till long after the promiſe that God had made to *Abraham*, could not diſannul the ſaid promiſe; but that God had given that law by the miniſtry of *Moſes*, he being mediator between God, and the people, to keep the *Iſraelites* in obedience, until *Chriſt* ſhould come; and to prepare men to receive that grace which was to render them all children of God, as well the Gentiles as the *Jews*; according to the promiſe that had been made to the patriarch *Abraham*.

REFLECTIONS.

WE are to conſider upon this chapter, I. That it is a great folly, and an extreme blindneſs, to turn aſide from the truth after we have known it, and to end ill, after having begun well. II. That the wonderful gifts of the Holy Ghoſt, which were communicated to the firſt Chriſtians, prove the divinity of the doctrine which they had embraced, and its excellency above the law. We ſee, III. The proofs St. *Paul* alledges, to ſhew that it is by faith in *Chriſt* that

that men are juſtified; which proofs are taken from the example of *Abraham* from the promiſes God had made him, from the curſe which the law denounced againſt the *Iſraelites*, and from the time when the law was given. The manner of the apoſtle's reaſoning upon this ſubject, ſhews that he had received from God extraordinary wiſdom, and ſhould convince us of the truth of his doctrine, ſince we find ſuch ſolid proofs of it in the law itſelf, and in the covenant which God had made with *Abraham*. IV. And laſtly, The wiſdom and goodneſs of God appear after a moſt remarkable manner, in his having given the law to reſtrain men from ſin, and bring them to *Chriſt*, till the time ſhould come when he would receive into his covenant both *Jews* and Gentiles. Let us from hence acknowledge, that ſince we have the happineſs to live in theſe times, and become the children and heirs of God, by faith in *Chriſt*, we are bound to render him a ſincere and filial obedience, and to diſcharge thoſe duties to which we are engaged by the covenant of grace, whereunto we have been received.

CHAP. IV.

THIS chapter conſiſts of three parts. I. In the firſt St. *Paul* repreſents the difference between the condition of the *Jews* under the law, and the glorious ſtate of Chriſtians under the Goſpel, who have the happineſs of being adopted the children of God; to ſhew how much the *Galatians* were to blame, in deſiring to return to the yoke of the *Moſaical* ceremonies. This he does by the compariſon of a child under tutors and governors, with a ſon who has his fortune in his own hands. II. He ſpeaks of the great affection which he had for them, and of that which they formerly had conceived for him, and lets them know how uneaſy he was on their account. III. He repreſents the difference there was between the covenant of the law, and that of the Goſpel, and between thoſe who adhered to the one or the other, under the types

of

of *Iſhmael* and *Iſaac*, the two ſons of *Abraham*; one born according to the courſe of nature, of *Hagar*, that was a ſervant; and the other miraculouſly born, according to the promiſe of God, of *Sarah*, who was a free woman, and the wife of *Abraham*.

REFLECTIONS.

THE general aim of this chapter is, I. To inſtruct us in the difference there is between *Jews* and Chriſtians, and to ſhew how happy we are who live under the Goſpel diſpenſation, that have been adopted of God to be his children, through faith in *Chriſt*. This is a doctrine which ſhould excite in us a lively ſenſe of our happineſs, and great gratitude towards God; it ought likewiſe to inſpire us with ſentiments worthy the glory of our adoption, and eſpecially induce us to live as the children of God, and to obey him willingly, and from a principle of love. II. As St. *Paul* laboured with great earneſtneſs to recover the purity of the faith among the *Galatians*, and prevent them from blending the ceremonies of the *Moſaical* law with the Goſpel, the miniſters of *Chriſt* ought to endeavour to maintain religion in its purity, and to preſerve their people from error and vice. And if the *Galatians* were to blame, to deſire, after they had been freed by *Jeſus Chriſt* from the *Moſaical* ceremonies, to be again under its yoke, Chriſtians are not leſs to blame, who having the knowledge of the Goſpel, apply themſelves to the vain and frivolous things of this world. III. The allegory of *Sarah* and *Hagar*, by which St. *Paul* repreſented the different ſtates of thoſe who wanted to remain under the covenant of the law, and thoſe who confined themſelves to that of the Goſpel, may likewiſe be applied to Chriſtians; and ſets before us the difference between thoſe who ſeek their happineſs in the things of this world, and remain under the ſlavery of ſin; and thoſe who, being freed from this bondage, enjoy the glorious liberty of the ſons of God. IV. We may obſerve in this chapter, that the *Galatians* had

had once had an extraordinary reſpect and love for St. *Paul*; but that he was afraid they were changed with reſpect to him, though he loved them as ſincerely as ever. Chriſtians ought to eſteem and cheriſh good and faithful paſtors; but they who having had theſe ſentiments, do not perſevere in them, are very much to blame, as well as thoſe who conceive an averſion to them becauſe they tell them the truth. As for the faithful ſervants of God, they have always the moſt tender affection for the church of *Chriſt*; are continually in fear for thoſe committed to their charge; and moſt heartily concerned when they do not make ſuitable returns for their love and care.

CHAP. V.

THERE are two parts in this chapter. I. In the firſt, St. *Paul* exhorts the *Galatians* to continue in their Chriſtian liberty, which, he ſays, conſiſts in not being ſubject to circumciſion, and to the ceremonies of the law of *Moſes*. He tells them, that *Chriſt* would be of no advantage to them, if they retained theſe ceremonies; and adviſes them not to hearken to ſuch as would ſuggeſt to them other ſentiments, and even not to endure them among them. II. He exhorts them not to abuſe this liberty, nor to take occaſion from thence to live licentiouſly, nor to follow the deſires of the fleſh. He recommends to them to love one another, and to live in peace, and gives a detail of the ſins to which the fleſh inclines men, and the fruits which the Holy Ghoſt produces in thoſe who are guided by him.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter is very inſtructive, and we ought carefully to remember the doctrine contained in it. St. *Paul* explains here very clearly, how we are to underſtand what he has taught in this Epiſtle; namely, that Chriſtians are no longer under the law, and that the works of the law are not neceſſary to juſtification.

That is to ſay, Chriſtians are not obliged to obſerve circumciſion, nor the other ceremonies of the law; but that they are under an indiſpenſible obligation of leading a holy life. The apoſtle ſays, in the cleareſt and moſt poſitive manner, that juſtifying faith operates by love and good works; and that we ought not to take occaſion from the doctrine of juſtification by faith, and our Chriſtian liberty, to live in ſin and licentiouſneſs. He ſhews what a great difference there is between thoſe that live according to the fleſh, and thoſe that are guided by the Spirit of God; he ſpecifies the ſins of the fleſh, the chief of which are impurity, ſenſuality, animoſities, and diviſions; and declares that thoſe who commit theſe ſins ſhall never enjoy the kingdom of God. He ſhews, what are the effects which the Spirit of God produces in true believers. Laſtly, He ſays, that thoſe who belong to *Chriſt*, and in whom his Spirit dwells, are diſtinguiſhed by their following the dictates of that Holy Spirit, and by their crucifying the fleſh with its affections and luſts. All this ſhews, that the deſign of the Goſpel is to advance men in piety and holineſs, and that this ought to be our chief ſtudy.

CHAP. VI.

I. ST. *Paul* exhorts the *Galatians* to reprove with meekneſs thoſe that fall into any fault, and to be animated towards them with a ſpirit of charity, humility and forbearance. He exhorts them, II. To provide for the ſubſiſtence of their teachers, and to exerciſe charity. III. He concludes with adviſing them once again, not to hearken to thoſe that would oblige them to be circumciſed, and makes a ſhort recapitulation of his doctrine, and of this whole Epiſtle.

REFLECTIONS.

ST. *Paul* teaches us in this chapter, I. That thoſe who have more knowledge than others, and are more advanced in piety, ought to bear with thoſe who are

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not ſo well inſtructed, and reprove with meekneſs thoſe who ſin through infirmity, conſidering them always as brethren, and remembering that they themſelves may likewiſe fall by temptation, and that every one is accountable to God for himſelf, and muſt bear his own burden. II. That Chriſtians are obliged to provide for the maintenance of their paſtors, and to do good to all men, but eſpecially to the members of the church, and thoſe who labour in its edification. III. That theſe are indiſpenſible duties, and that God will judge us according to the manner of our diſcharging them; as St. *Paul* ſhews, when he ſays, *Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatſoever a man ſoweth, that ſhall he alſo reap.*—Laſtly, It muſt be obſerved, and carefully remembered, what St. *Paul* ſays at the end of his Epiſtle, and which is the ſum of his whole doctrine; that God will not conſider whether a man be a *Jew* or a Gentile, whether he be circumciſed or uncircumciſed; but that what he chiefly requires is, that we become new men regenerated. This is the meaning of the following words: *In Chriſt Jeſus neither circumciſion availeth any thing, nor uncircumciſion, but a new creature, and as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Iſrael of God.* Amen.

The End of the Epiſtle of St. PAUL *to the* GALATIANS.

THE

EPISTLE OF ST. PAUL.

TO THE

EPHESIANS.

ARGUMENT.

St. Paul writ this Epiſtle when he was a priſoner at Rome, *about the year of our Lord ſixty-one, to the church of* Epheſus, *which he himſelf had founded; having made a conſiderable ſtay in that city, as appears from* Acts xix. 20. *This Epiſtle conſiſts of two parts. In the firſt, which is contained in the three firſt chapters, he repreſents to the* Epheſians *the favour which God had ſhewed them in receiving them into his covenant, who had been moſt of them Gentiles. In the ſecond, he exhorts them to holineſs, and inſtructs them in the principal duties of the Chriſtian life; this is the deſign of the three laſt chapters.*

CHAP. I.

I. THE apoſtle returns thanks to God for having choſen the *Epheſians* to ſalvation, and for having given them the knowledge of *Chriſt*, and the gifts of the Holy Ghoſt. II. He prays to the Lord to increaſe their knowledge and their gifts, and that he

he would give them grace rightly to comprehend the excellency of their vocation, and the glory to which they were called in *Jeſus Chriſt*.

REFLECTIONS.

THE beginning of this Epiſtle teaches us, I. That the greateſt bleſſing God ever beſtowed on men, was to give them the knowledge of *Jeſus Chriſt*, to ordain the means of ſalvation, and call them to it by the Goſpel. II. That this great favour, and all the ſpiritual bleſſings we enjoy, proceed wholly from the mercy of God, who has vouchſafed to elect us to ſalvation in his Son. III. That our hearts ought to be affected with ſo valuable a bleſſing, and that we ſhould praiſe God continually for it, ſaying, with St. *Paul*, *Bleſſed be the God and Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who hath bleſſed us with all ſpiritual bleſſings in heavenly places in Chriſt.* IV. That the deſign which God propoſed to himſelf in thus chooſing and calling us to the knowledge of himſelf, was to render us holy and unreprovable before him in love; and therefore that holineſs ought to be our chief ſtudy, as it is the only means of attaining to glory. V. The prayers which St. *Paul* offers up for the *Epheſians*, teach us, that it is not ſufficient to have been once enlightened by the Goſpel, and to have had ſome ſenſe of the love of God, but that we ſhould always go on increaſing in goodneſs, and labour to acquire daily more and more knowledge, and make a continual progreſs in holineſs. VI. And laſtly, Since all our happineſs, and our increaſe in faith and holineſs depend, as St. *Paul* has aſſured us in ſtrong terms, on our underſtanding rightly the excellence of the divine call, and of the heavenly treaſure, we ought continually to meditate upon them, and beg of God to enlighten us, and ſtrengthen us more and more by his grace, in this beautiful prayer of the apoſtle: *That the God of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt the Father of glory, may give unto us the ſpirit of wiſdom, —that the eyes of our underſtanding being enlightened,*

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we may know the hope of his calling, and what are the riches of the glory of his inheritance which he has prepared for the ſaints. Amen.

CHAP. II.

IN this chapter the apoſtle ſhews, I. That when all men, both *Jews* and Gentiles, were dead in their ſins, God ſaved them by *Jeſus Chriſt*; and he obſerves particularly, that they were indebted for this great benefit to the ſole mercy of God, who had delivered them from a ſtate of condemnation and corruption, and had given them a capacity of doing good works, II. He then puts the *Epheſians* in mind that they were formerly heathens, and excluded from the covenant of God; and of the favour God had ſhewn them, in removing the diſtinction which was between them and the *Jews*, and in uniting them ſo as to be but one people, and from thenceforwards to compoſe, all of them together, but one family and one temple, holy to the Lord.

REFLECTIONS.

WE are to conſider here, I. That all men without exception were naturally in a ſtate of corruption and condemnation, and dead in treſpaſſes and ſins; but that they are delivered from this diſmal ſtate, and raiſed to the hope of eternal life, through the great mercy of God, and by the death and reſurrection of our Lord *Jeſus Chriſt*. From whence it follows, that if we be ſaved, it is by the pure grace of God, and does not proceed from ourſelves. But this doctrine ſhews us likewiſe, that the deſign of God was to bring men off from their corruption, and to ſanctify them; and that although we be not ſaved by works, yet *God has created us in Chriſt Jeſus unto good works, which he hath prepared for us to walk in*, as St. *Paul* ſays. II. We ſee in this chapter, that the diſtinction which there was formerly between the *Jews* and Gentiles, is aboliſhed, ſince *Chriſt* has cauſed ſalvation to be-

preached

preached unto the Gentiles, who were not in covenant with him, as well as to the *Jews*. This doctrine ſhould produce in us, who are deſcended from the heathens, a lively ſenſe of the goodneſs of God, and make us *remember, that we were in time paſt Gentiles, —having no hope, and without God in the world: but now are made nigh by the blood of Chriſt; ſo that we are no more ſtrangers, but fellow-citizens with the ſaints, and of the houſhold of God.* So great a favour obliges us to great gratitude, and to live in a manner ſuitable to the glory of our condition, and to the happy ſtate in which it has pleaſed God to place us.

CHAP. III.

I. AFTER St. *Paul* had taught us in the foregoing chapter, that the Gentiles who had embraced Chriſtianity compoſed but one people with the converted *Jews*, he tells the *Epheſians* that he was a priſoner at *Rome* for preaching this doctrine; the *Jews* having accuſed him, and delivered him to the Gentiles for no other reaſon. He obſerves, that the calling of the Gentiles had been formerly a hidden myſtery, and unknown to mankind; but that God had foretold it by the prophets, and revealed it to the apoſtles by the Holy Ghoſt; and he exhorts the *Epheſians* not to be diſheartened at the afflictions he endured, and which were ſo glorious and profitable for them. II. He next beſeeches God to confirm them in his calling, to ſtrengthen them in faith, charity, and all kind of ſpiritual gifts, and give them the grace to know more and more the great and wonderful love of our Lord *Jeſus Chriſt*.

REFLECTIONS.

ST. *Paul* teaches us in this chapter, that the calling of the Gentiles was a myſtery unknown before the coming of *Chriſt*, but that the myſtery had been revealed by the Holy Ghoſt to the apoſtles. This ſhould engage us to bleſs God with all our heart, not only becauſe

becauſe we live in a time in which this myſtery is revealed, but particularly as we are of thoſe nations which were formerly in the darkneſs of idolatry, but do now partake of the promiſes of God by the Goſpel, inſomuch that we have at preſent a free acceſs to God by his Son *Jeſus Chriſt*. Let us continually meditate upon this great mercy, which God has exerciſed towards us; let us have a juſt ſenſe of the value and extent of this wonderful love of our Lord, to the end we may be thereby more and more excited to love him, and aſpire to the glory he has prepared for us; this is the effect which the doctrine laid down by the apoſtle in this chapter ought to produce in us; for which purpoſe let us beſeech God with St. *Paul, to grant us, according to the riches of his glory, to be ſtrengthened with might, by his ſpirit, in the inner man; that Chriſt may dwell in our hearts by faith; that we being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all ſaints the greatneſs of God's love in Chriſt Jeſus, and may be filled with the abundance of God's grace.* Amen.

CHAP. IV.

ST. *Paul* here begins to exhort the *Epheſians* to the duties of a Chriſtian life, recommending to them, before all things, peace and concord. To induce them to it, he ſhews, I. That all Chriſtians enjoy in common the ſame ſpiritual advantages; that the different gifts which *Chriſt* granted to men, after his aſcenſion into heaven, and the different offices he had appointed in the church, did all tend to the mutual edification of the faithful; to unite them to each other, ſo as to make but one body; to confirm them in truth and holineſs, and guide them by this means to perfection and ſalvation. II. After this the apoſtle exhorts the *Epheſians* not to live as they had done before their converſion to Chriſtianity, and as the heathens ſtill did; but to lead a life entirely new, and conformable to the precepts of the Goſpel of *Chriſt*.

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He warns them particularly againſt the impurities and diſſoluteneſs of the heathens, as well as lying, theft, wrath, obſcene diſcourſes, ſlander, and all bitterneſs and animoſities.

REFLECTIONS.

FROM this chapter we may gather, I. In general that Chriſtians ought to live in a manner ſuitable to the vocation wherewith God has honoured them. II. That being all members of the ſame body, having all of us the ſame faith, the ſame hope, the ſame God, and the ſame Saviour, we ought to live in peace and in perfect unity. III. That ſince our Lord has diſtributed different gifts to men, and has particularly appointed after his aſcenſion, extraordinary miniſters, ſuch as the apoſtles, and ordinary miniſters, ſuch as paſtors and teachers, we are bound to acknowledge the neceſſity and advantage of the miniſtry, to make a right uſe of it, and by its means to improve in faith, in piety, and charity. IV. That Chriſtians ſhould not be like wavering and fickle children, nor give credit to all kinds of doctrines, and to all that corrupt and deſigning men may inſinuate; but that they ſhould be ſteady in their belief, and for that purpoſe adhere inviolably to the Goſpel, and to the doctrine of *Jeſus Chriſt*, which alone can lead them to perfection and eternal happineſs. V. St. *Paul* here teaches us, that the Chriſtian Religion calls us to holineſs, and that thoſe who have been inſtructed in the truth by *Jeſus Chriſt*, are by no means allowed to live like the Gentiles, who were involved in ignorance, and for want of knowing God, abandoned themſelves to all kinds of diſorders; that the deſign of the Goſpel is, that *We ſhould put off the old man, which is corrupt, according to the deceitful luſts; and that we ſhould be renewed in our minds, and—put on the new man, which after God is created in righteouſneſs and true holineſs.* VI. The particular ſins which St. *Paul* condemns as altogether unworthy of Chriſtians, are firſt, impurity and diſſoluteneſs, which he repreſents as the reigning

ſin

ſin of the heathen; next, lying and deceiving, injuſtice and theft; idleneſs, laſciviouſneſs, and indecent diſcourſe; which offend our neighbour, and grieve the Spirit of God; and laſtly, anger, bitterneſs, and calumny. Chriſtianity engages us to avoid all theſe ſins; and to ſtudy purity, ſincerity, juſtice, and meekneſs; that ſo we may bear the image of our heavenly Father, and that he may own us for the diſciples of his Son *Jeſus Chriſt* our Lord.

CHAP. V.

IN this chapter we ſee, I. Exhortations to charity and purity. St. *Paul*, to diſſuade the *Epheſians* from impurity, in particular declares to them, that that ſin would draw down upon men the wrath of God; and repreſents to them, that God had delivered them from the darkneſs of paganiſm, by enlightening them with the light of the Goſpel. II. He adviſes them to behave with prudence, to redeem the time, and to avoid exceſs of wine, and profane mirth; and exhorts them to ſpiritual joy and thankſgiving. III. He preſcribes the duties of huſbands and wives.

REFLECTIONS.

WE are to learn from hence, I. That the character of children of God, which we bear, obliges us to imitate him, eſpecially in his love, and in his goodneſs, and to walk in the ſteps of our Lord *Jeſus Chriſt*, who ſo loved us as to give himſelf for us. II. That Chriſtians cannot have too much horror for impurity; that this vice ſhould not be ſo much as named among them; that they ought never to utter any free, fooliſh, or indecent words, nor any thing contrary to modeſty; but that all their diſcourſes ought to be grave and edifying; and that thoſe who tranſgreſs the laws of purity and chaſtity, and live in uncleanneſs, bring upon themſelves the wrath of God, and will have no part in his kingdom. III. That the light of the Goſpel, which

which has ſhined upon us, delivering us from the darkneſs of paganiſm, does not allow us to imitate the heathens in their diſorders, and that ſo far from partaking of other men's ſins, we are rather to reprove them. IV. St. *Paul* gives us a rule of prudence, adviſing us in all reſpects to govern ourſelves with wiſdom and caution, and to make a good uſe of time. V. He ſays, that intemperance and drunkenneſs are vices utterly unworthy of Chriſtians; and that, inſtead of abandoning ourſelves to ſenſuality, and to carnal and profane pleaſures, we ſhould ſeek after that ſpiritual joy which the Holy Ghoſt produces, and which excites us to edify one another, and to praiſe God continually in heart and mouth; *giving thanks always for all things, unto God and the Father, in the name of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.* Laſtly, The apoſtle, proceeding to particular duties, exhorts huſbands and wives to live together in perfect harmony. The duty of huſbands is to love their wives; and that of wives, to honour their huſbands, and to be in ſubjection to them; the love which huſbands owe to their wives, he repreſents by the love of *Chriſt* to his church; and the ſubjection which wives ought to be in to their huſbands, by the church's dependence on *Jeſus Chriſt.* This compariſon made uſe of by St. *Paul*, repreſents, in the ſtrongeſt light, the neceſſity of theſe reciprocal duties between man and wife, and how ſincere their union ought to be; which ſhould convince us of the great importance of St. *Paul*'s inſtructions upon this ſubject.

CHAP. VI.

ST. *Paul* lays down the duties of children and parents; of ſervants and maſters. II. He repreſents to the *Epheſians*, that ſince they were not only to fight againſt weak men, but likewiſe againſt all that is powerful in the world, and even againſt their ſpiritual enemies, the evil angels; they ought to be clothed and armed with faith, righteouſneſs, and hope,

and make uſe of the word of God and prayer, that they may reſiſt and overcome their enemies. III. He concludes this Epiſtle, by recommending himſelf to the prayers of the *Epheſians*, and likewiſe by praying for them.

REFLECTIONS.

THE duties here preſcribed are very important, and highly neceſſary, not only to the good of families, and of civil ſociety, but alſo for the edification of the church. The firſt of theſe duties relates to children, who are obliged by the command of God, as well as the law of nature, to obey their fathers and mothers, according to the will of the Lord; and that parents, on the other hand, are bound to take care of their children, eſpecially to educate them in the fear of God, and in a Chriſtian manner, giving them all neceſſary inſtructions, adding to theſe reproof and correction, when they ſtand in need of them. As for ſervants, their condition engages them to obey their maſters, and to ſerve them faithfully, whether abſent or preſent. On the other hand, maſters ſhould treat their domeſtics with gentleneſs and equity; remembering that there is a Maſter in heaven, to whom they are ſubject as well as their ſervants, and who has no reſpect of perſons. And let it be conſidered, that if maſters were to have this juſt regard for their ſervants, who in thoſe times were moſtly Gentiles, and were ſlaves beſides; maſters are now much more obliged to perform the ſame duties, ſince their ſervants are free perſons, and Chriſtians, as well as themſelves. The ſecond part of this chapter engages us to remember, I. That being in this life expoſed to divers dangers, but eſpecially to our ſpiritual enemies, and to the temptations with which we are ſurrounded, we ought to ſtand upon our guard, to reſiſt thoſe enemies, and to ſecure ourſelves from their ſnares. That for this purpoſe, we ought always to confirm and ſtrengthen ourſelves in faith, in truth, and in hope:

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to read and meditate continually upon the word of God, and to pray with zeal and perſeverance. What is ſaid about the end of this Epiſtle, teaches us, that Chriſtians are obliged, by the love they owe to *Jeſus Chriſt*, and for their own intereſt, to pray for thoſe who preach the word of God, and who labour to promote his kingdom; and that paſtors, on their part, ought likewiſe to pray for the churches of *Chriſt*, and to put up prayers in behalf of all Chriſtians, as St. *Paul* did for the *Epheſians*; namely, that *peace may be to the brethren, and love, with faith from God the Father and the Lord Jeſus Chriſt; that grace may be with all them that love our Lord Jeſus Chriſt in ſincerity.* Amen.

The End of the Epiſtle of St. PAUL *to the* EPHESIANS.

THE

THE

EPISTLE OF ST. PAUL

TO THE

PHILIPPIANS.

ARGUMENT.

St. Paul *wrote this Epiſtle, as well as the former, while he was a priſoner at* Rome, *about the year of* Chriſt *ſixty-one, to thank the Chriſtians of the city of* Philippi, *for the relief they had ſent him to* Rome *by* Epaphroditus, *one of their paſtors. He informs them of his condition, and gives them ſeveral exhortations.*

CHAP. I.

I. ST. *Paul* begins with thankſgivings, and with prayers for the confirmation of the *Philippians* in faith and holineſs. II. He tells them, that his impriſonment had contributed towards promoting the Goſpel in the city of *Rome.* III. He declares he was diſpoſed to glorify *Chriſt*, whether by life or death, and that he only deſired to live for the advantage of the church. IV. He exhorts the *Philippians* to a behaviour worthy of the Goſpel, and to patience in afflictions.

REFLEC-

REFLECTIONS *after reading the chapter.*

I. WE ſee at the entrance of this Epiſtle, St. *Paul's* great zeal and perfect charity, in the prayers which he offers up to God for the *Philippians*, and in the proofs he gives them of his love and joy at hearing of their ſtedfaſtneſs in the faith. This is a leſſon to paſtors to love their flocks with a cordial affection in *Chriſt Jeſus*, and to pray to God inceſſantly for the entire ſanctification of the faithful. II. We ought to admire the ways of God's Providence, who was pleaſed that St. *Paul* ſhould be impriſoned at *Rome*, that he might have an opportunity to preach the Goſpel there, and that his ſufferings might ſerve to excite the zeal of many, who were before afraid to make an open profeſſion of the Goſpel. This is one of thoſe examples which prove that what the enemies of the truth do to deſtroy it, helps often to ſpread it the more. III. We ſee that though there were people who preached the Goſpel out of envy and jealouſy againſt St. *Paul*, yet he rejoiced becauſe the Goſpel was thereby promoted. God ſometimes makes uſe even of perſons who do not act upon a good principle, to perform his work; but however it be done, thoſe who, like St. *Paul*, are animated with a true zeal, are pleaſed with it, even though it be a prejudice to themſelves. IV. The ſentiments of this apoſtle concerning life and death, are ſuch as all true Chriſtians ought to entertain; who ſhould always be ready both to live and to die for the glory of God; their deſire is to leave the world, that they may be with the Lord; and if they wiſh to live, it is only that they may be uſeful to the church, and to their neighbours. Finally, This paſſage of the Epiſtle to the *Philippians*, where St. *Paul* ſays, he deſired to leave this world to be with the Lord, proves clearly, that the faithful are happy and with the Lord after their death, in expectation of the reſurrection: for if it was not ſo, this apoſtle would have had no reaſon to deſire death rather

ther than life. V. The close of this chapter shews, that the duty of all Christians is, to behave in a manner worthy of the Gospel, and not to be staggered at afflictions, especially when they undergo them for the sake of *Christ*.

CHAP. II.

I. ST. *Paul* exhorts the *Philippians* very affectionately to concord and humility. And to this end he proposes the example of *Christ*'s humiliation, and of the glory to which he was afterwards exalted. And represents to them that this is an inducement to work out their salvation with humility and perseverance. II. He exhorts them to live in peace, and by a pure and innocent behaviour to edify the heathens among whom they lived; and he assures them he would suffer death with joy, if it were necessary for the confirmation of their faith. III. He promises to send *Timothy* to them, whose zeal and faithfulness he praises. He likewise recommends to them *Epaphroditus*, one of their pastors, who was returning to them after recovering from a great sickness.

REFLECTIONS.

WE learn from hence, I. That one of the most important duties of Christians, is true charity; that they should live together in perfect unity, and in a spirit of humility, and that they should promote the interests of others as well as their own. II. St. *Paul* sets before our eyes the profound humiliation of *Jesus Christ*, who, though he was equal to God, abased himself even to the death of the cross, and who, by his obedience and sufferings, was exalted to supreme glory. The apostle proposes this example, to teach us, that if we have the same sentiments of humility as our Saviour had, we shall likewise attain to glory. III. This serious exhortation, *Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling*, should inspire us all with a

great zeal, to labour continually with profound humility in the work of our ſalvation; making uſe for that purpoſe of the means which God affords us, among which one of the moſt effectual is, to have recourſe to him by prayer, foraſmuch as it is *God who worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleaſure.* IV. This chapter further teaches us, that Chriſtians ought to avoid quarrels and diſputes, and diſtinguiſh themſelves by an unblameable behaviour, ſo that they may ſhine like burning lights in a crooked and perverſe generation. V. St. *Paul*'s declaration, that he was ready to ſacrifice his blood and his life with pleaſure, for the edification of the *Philippians*, ſhews, that the true miniſters of *Chriſt* are entirely devoted to the ſervice of God and of his church; that this is the end of all their labours; and that when it is neceſſary to loſe even their lives for the advancement of the ſalvation of men, they ought to lay them down with gladneſs. VI. The teſtimony which the apoſtle gives of the ſincerity and great zeal of *Timothy*; what he ſays of *Epaphroditus*, of his ſickneſs and recovery, and the earneſt manner in which he recommends him to the *Philippians*, ſhews, that true paſtors, who only ſeek the intereſts of *Chriſt*, and diſcharge their function with zeal and ſincerity, deſerve all the love and all the eſteem of Chriſtians; that the lives and preſervation of ſuch ought to be very dear to the church; that they ought to be received with all demonſtrations of joy, and to be highly eſteemed by their people, who ſhould ſubmit to their inſtructions and exhortations.

CHAP. III.

I. ST. *Paul* adviſes the *Philippians* not to hearken to falſe teachers, who preached up the obſervation of circumciſion, and boaſted of the external advantages that diſtinguiſhed the *Jews* from other nations. II. He ſhews by his example, that all thoſe advantages which he had been in poſſeſſion of when

he lived in *Judaiſm*, were unprofitable, and even prejudicial to ſalvation; and he ſays, that it was for that reaſon he had renounced them, to adhere to *Chriſt* alone; and that he continually endeavoured to advance more and more in the knowledge of our Lord, and to attain to perfection and glory, by an entire conformity to his ſufferings and reſurrection. III. He exhorts the *Philippians* to come into his ſentiments, and to avoid their falſe teachers, whoſe character he deſcribes, ſaying, that they were carnal men; whereas true Chriſtians are ſpiritual, and do only aim at heaven.

REFLECTIONS.

We are to obſerve in general in this whole chapter, that as St. *Paul* exhorted the *Philippians* to beware of falſe teachers, who endeavoured to enſlave them to the ceremonies of the law of *Moſes*, it is very neceſſary that Chriſtians ſhould fortify themſelves againſt error, and all that is contrary to the purity of faith. Beſides which, we may gather from this chapter theſe four diſtinguiſhing marks of true Chriſtians. I. The firſt is, that they have the ſame opinion of the things of the world, as St. *Paul* had of the external advantages he poſſeſſed when he was a *Jew*; that is to ſay, that they ſet no value upon thoſe things in compariſon of the excellency of the knowledge of *Chriſt* their Lord; and that they conſider them even as hurtful, when they hinder them from following their heavenly calling. II. The ſecond character of true Chriſtians is, that, in imitation of St. *Paul*, they aim at perfection, ſeeking always to become more and more like unto their Saviour, leaving the things which are behind them, advancing towards thoſe before them, and by continual endeavours preſſing to the mark and prize of their calling in *Chriſt Jeſus*. III. The third character of the faithful is, that being united all in one common faith, and the belief of the ſame eſſential truths, they live in peace; and if they ſhould have different ſentiments in matters of little importance,

their

their difference of opinion will not cauſe a diviſion and ſeparation among them. IV. The laſt character St. *Paul* gives of the true diſciples of our Lord is, that whereas carnal men do only love the things of the world, and have no other God but their belly; true Chriſtians live after a ſpiritual and a heavenly manner, behaving themſelves as thoſe whoſe country is heaven, from whence they expect their Lord and Saviour, who will come from thence to raiſe them up, and to receive them into the glory of his kingdom.

CHAP. IV.

THIS chapter conſiſts of two parts. I. The firſt contains exhortations to perſeverance, unity, and ſpiritual joy; to confidence in God, and to a holy life. II. In the ſecond, St. *Paul* thanks the *Philippians* for the contributions they had ſent him for his ſubſiſtence in priſon; and prays for them.

REFLECTIONS.

THE firſt part of this chapter inſtructs us in theſe five duties. I. The firſt is, to perſevere continually in the purity of faith, and in piety. II. The apoſtle's exhortation to *Eodias* and *Syntyche*, two Chriſtian women, who, without doubt, differed in their opinion upon ſome article of religion, to live in peace, ſhews, that Chriſtians ought to live in unity, to endeavour to be of one mind in matters of faith, and to bear with each other, if they do not in every reſpect think alike. III. The third duty, is to rejoice always in God with a ſpiritual joy. IV. The fourth, not to be full of the cares of this life, but to have recourſe to God by prayer in all our wants, and to truſt in his providence. V. The fifth duty is of a very great extent; it is to adhere conſtantly to all things that are honeſt, juſt, pure, holy, virtuous, and praiſe-worthy. There may be two reflections made upon the ſecond part of this chapter. I. Firſt, St. *Paul* teaches us, by his example, to be contented in whatever ſtate or condition we find

ourſelves, whether we be in poverty, or whether we be in plenty. II. Secondly, The thanks which this apoſtle returns the *Philippians* for what they had ſent to him at *Rome*, to ſupport him when a priſoner, expreſs great diſintereſtedneſs, and at the ſame time no leſs gratitude; and the prayers he offers to God for them, upon that occaſion, teach us, that it is a work very agreeable to God, to aſſiſt ſuch as are in want, and particularly his faithful ſervants, and thoſe that ſuffer for the Goſpel; that theſe works of charity rejoice and comfort good men, and that they are ſacrifices of a ſweet ſavour, which God accepts, and rewards according to the riches of his grace, with glory in *Jeſus Chriſt*.

The End of the Epiſtle of St. PAUL *to the* PHILIPPIANS.

THE

THE

EPISTLE OF ST. PAUL

TO THE

COLOSSIANS.

ARGUMENT.

This is likewiſe an Epiſtle which St. Paul *writ whilſt he was a priſoner at* Rome *the firſt time, in the year of our Lord ſixty-one. The deſign of it is to exhort the* Coloſſians *not to ſuffer themſelves to be ſeduced by certain falſe teachers, who would perſuade them to join the ceremonies of the law, and the notions of the heathen philoſophers, to the Chriſtian faith. This is the ſubject of the two firſt chapters. In the two laſt, he preſcribes the principal duties of piety and holineſs.*

CHAP. I.

THIS chapter conſiſts of two parts. I. St. *Paul* praiſes God that the Goſpel had been preached to the *Coloſſians* by *Epaphras*, and had had great ſucceſs among them; and he beſeeches the Lord to fill them more and more with the knowledge of his will, and with all kind of ſpiritual gifts. II. The apoſtle repreſents *Chriſt* as the only author of ſalvation: as him

him who created the angels and all other creatures; and by whom all men, the Gentiles in particular, have been perfectly reconciled to God. St. *Paul* ſpeaks thus to the *Coloſſians*, to convince them that the doctrine of *Chriſt* was ſufficient to bring men to perfection and ſalvation, without any neceſſity of the law of *Moſes*, or any other doctrines. III. Laſtly, He aſſures them that the ſufferings which he endured, ought not to ſtagger them in the profeſſion of the Goſpel; and that the end of his preaching was to bring the Gentiles and all men to ſalvation.

REFLECTIONS *after reading the chapter.*

I. THE praiſes and thankſgivings with which St. *Paul* begins this Epiſtle, teach us, that God has granted us the greateſt bleſſing in cauſing his Goſpel to be preached among us, and that we ought to praiſe him continually for it; but this bleſſing can be of no uſe to us, unleſs, as St. *Paul* exhorted the *Coloſſians*, we walk worthy of the Lord, doing that which is well pleaſing in his ſight, and being fruitful in every good work. II. The prayers St. *Paul* joins to theſe thankſgivings, teach us, that it is not enough to have arrived at ſome degree of truth and holineſs, but that we ought to aim at perfection, and to beg of God that he would continually increaſe his knowledge, and the gifts of the ſpirit in us. Theſe prayers of the apoſtle inſtruct us farther, that the purpoſe for which God grants us this knowledge and theſe gifts, is to frame our minds to holineſs, to bring us to perfection and glory, by a continual increaſe of his grace. We ſee in the ſecond part of this chapter, that *Chriſt* is the creator of all things, that to know him is the moſt perfect and uſeful knowledge, and that by him God has been pleaſed to reconcile all men to himſelf. What we are to gather from hence is, that we are to ſeek for ſalvation in *Chriſt Jeſus* alone, by continually perſevering in faith and obedience to the Goſpel, and that no temptation whatever ſhould be able to turn us away from it.

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

I. ST. *Paul* teſtifies to the *Coloſſians*, that his fear leſt they ſhould ſuffer themſelves to be drawn away by thoſe who endeavoured to introduce the ſubtilties of philoſophy, and the traditions of the *Jews* into the Chriſtian Religion, obliged him to make uſe of theſe exhortations. II. For this reaſon he continues to repreſent to them, that in *Chriſt Jeſus* every thing was found that was neceſſary to juſtify and ſanctify men; and conſequently, that they ought not to give heed to philoſophy, no more than to the ceremonies of the *Jews*, ſince they were uſeleſs, and had been aboliſhed by the death of *Chriſt*. III. He concludes from thence, that Chriſtians are no longer bound to obſerve theſe ceremonies, and that they ought not to liſten to thoſe who would confine them to a diſtinction of meats and days, and introduce the worſhip of angels, and ſeveral vain and ſuperſtitious practices.

REFLECTIONS.

THE great zeal St. *Paul* ſhews at the beginning of this chapter for the *Coloſſians*, and his apprehenſions of their being ſeduced by falſe teachers, proves, that the rulers of the church, and Chriſtians in general, ought carefully to guard againſt error, and to beware that they be not diverted from the pure faith by ſubtilties, or doctrines invented by men. II. We ſee here, that the true way to prevent being ſeduced, is to adhere to *Chriſt* alone, and to his Goſpel, and to look upon him as one that has perfectly atoned for our ſins; from whom alone all knowledge and holineſs proceed, and who will undoubtedly ſave thoſe who truly believe in him. III. It ought to be obſerved, that when St. *Paul* ſays, that *Chriſt* has, by his death, taken away the obligation that was againſt us, and which conſiſted in the legal ordinances, having entirely aboliſhed them, this only relates to circumciſion,

cumciſion, and the ceremonies which God had formerly preſcribed to the *Jews;* but that he has not freed us from the obligation of keeping the commandments of God; that, on the contrary, he died to enable us to obſerve them the better, and to communicate his grace to us after a much more perfect manner than the *Moſaical* ceremonies were able to do. Laſtly, We learn from this chapter, that it is a very dangerous thing to introduce into religion voluntary will-worſhip, and the inventions of men, and vain and ſuperſtitious cuſtoms, though they even carry with them ſome appearance of devotion; and that we ſhould always confine ourſelves to the Goſpel, and adhere to that true and ſolid piety which is there preſcribed, and which conſiſts in a pure faith, and in a renunciation of the world, and of the luſts of the fleſh.

CHAP. III.

I. ST. *Paul* ſhews, that faith in *Chriſt* raiſed from the dead, engages Chriſtians to ſeek for the things of heaven, and to renounce thoſe ſins that were common among the Gentiles, and particularly uncleanneſs. II. He exhorts them next, to kindneſs, humility, mutual forgiveneſs, charity, peace, and to glorify God with their diſcourſes, by their praiſes, and by their whole behaviour. III. He ſhews laſtly, the duties of wives and huſbands, of children and parents, of ſervants and maſters.

REFLECTIONS.

IN this chapter St. *Paul* ſhews, that thoſe who truly believe that *Chriſt* is riſen, and that he ſits on the right hand of God, will not ſet their hearts upon worldly things, but turn their thoughts to heaven, and to that life which is prepared for us in *Chriſt Jeſus.* II. The apoſtle informs us, that of the ſins which Chriſtianity obliges us to renounce, one, which particularly

particularly expoſes men to the wrath of God, is impurity and all uncleanneſs, whether of thought, word, or deed; next he forbids all kind of wrath, calumny, unkind expreſſions, lying, and, in general, all the vices of the old man, that is of corrupt nature. He points out in the virtues and principal duties of the Chriſtian life; which are, to abound in mercy, kindneſs, meekneſs, and humility; to bear with and pardon one another, to have a ſincere love for our neighbour, to edify one another by good diſcourſes, to be continually rendering thanks to God our Father, and ſo to behave ourſelves, that all our words, and all our actions, may tend to his glory. III. To theſe general duties St. *Paul* adds the particular ones, to which wives and huſbands, children and parents, ſervants and maſters, are mutually obliged; commanding wives to ſubmit to their huſbands, huſbands to love their wives; children to obey their parents, and fathers to treat their children with mildneſs; ſervants to obey their maſters, and be faithful to them, from a principle of conſcience, and maſters to be juſt and equitable to their ſervants. The repetition here made of theſe particular duties, which the apoſtle had before mentioned in the Epiſtle to the *Epheſians*, is an argument of the greateſt importance to them. Let us therefore obſerve theſe inviolably, and all the other precepts contained in this chapter; which are ſo juſt, and ſo worthy of the religion we profeſs; and diſcharge all the duties required of us, whether in our general calling, as Chriſtians, or in the particular ſtate and condition in which God has placed us.

CHAP. IV.

I. THE apoſtle exhorts the *Coloſſians* to perſevere in prayer, and to behave wiſely, and to ſpeak with prudence and meekneſs upon all occaſions. II. He recommends *Tychicus* and *Oneſimus*, whom he ſent to them; and concludes his Epiſtle by ſalutations and ſome advices.

REFLECTIONS.

THE firſt duty which St. *Paul* recommends in this chapter, is to pray continually; to perſevere in that holy exerciſe, and in thankſgivings; and, particularly, to pray for the miniſters of *Jeſus Chriſt*, that they may preach the Goſpel as it ought to be preached. II. The ſecond duty is to be very prudent, and to redeem the time, eſpecially when we have to do with perſons who have an averſion to truth and holineſs; to ſpeak always with wiſdom and gentleneſs, and in ſuch a manner, as tends moſt to the edification of thoſe that hear us, and to avoid every thing that may expoſe us to danger, without neceſſity, or give offence to any one. Laſtly, The good character St. *Paul* gives of *Tychicus*, *Oneſimus*, *Mark*, *Jeſus*, *Epaphras*, and St. *Luke*, who were all of them excellent ſervants of God, and the manner in which he recommends them to the *Coloſſians*, ſhould convince all Chriſtians, that good miniſters, who behave worthy of their office, are a very valuable bleſſing, and that we ought to love them ſincerely, and that they ſhould be received by the church with all kind of reſpect and affection, as they, on their part, ought to grow more and more zealous, and take heed of the adminiſtration which they have received of the Lord, that they may faithfully diſcharge it.

The End of the Epiſtle of St. PAUL *to the* COLOSSIANS.

THE

THE

FIRST EPISTLE OF ST. PAUL

TO THE

THESSALONIANS.

ARGUMENT.

This Epiſtle, which is the oldeſt of St. Paul's *Epiſtles, was wrote in the fifty-firſt year of* Chriſt. *In the three firſt chapters the apoſtle expreſſes his great joy to hear the happy ſtate of the* Theſſalonians, *and their ſteadineſs in perſecutions. He likewiſe informs them what had happened to him, what ſentiments he had had, and what he ſtill had for them. In the two laſt he exhorts them to piety and holineſs.*

CHAP. I.

ST. *Paul* praiſes God, I. That the *Theſſalonians* had received the Goſpel which he had preached to them with faith and zeal. And, II. That their church was a pattern to all the churches of *Macedonia* and *Achaia.*

REFLEC-

REFLECTIONS *after reading the chapter.*

IT is to be obſerved in general, on this Epiſtle, that there is no church which St. *Paul* ſpeaks ſo advantageouſly of, and commends ſo much as the church of *Theſſalonica*. At the entrance of the Epiſtle he expreſſes the greateſt joy, and renders moſt hearty thanks to God for the happy ſtate of the *Theſſalonians*: calling to remembrance the manner in which they received his preaching, their faith, charity, and patience; which ſhews, that the glory of any church, and what affords the greateſt joy and comfort to the faithful ſervants of God, is to ſee the Goſpel bring forth fruit, and faith, and every virtue flouriſh and abound in it. The church of *Theſſalonica*, which was formerly an example in this reſpect to the reſt, may be ſtill propoſed for a pattern to all Chriſtian churches. We ſhould likewiſe apply to ourſelves what St. *Paul* ſaid to the *Theſſalonians*, touching their converſion to the Chriſtian Religion; ſince, like them, we alſo, through the mercy of God, have been delivered from the darkneſs of heatheniſm, and *are turned from idols, to ſerve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raiſed from the dead, even JESUS, which delivers us from the wrath to come.*

CHAP. II.

ST. *Paul* does three things in this chapter. I. He puts the *Theſſalonians* in mind, that he had preached the Goſpel to them with ſincerity, and without any view of intereſt; and, that he might not be burdenſome to them, he had ſupported himſelf by his own labour; and that he had always exhorted them to live to the honour of that God, who had called them to his glory. II. He bleſſes God, that his miniſtry had been effectual among them, and that they had endured with ſo much conſtancy, the perſecutions which at that time were every where raiſed againſt the Chriſtians

tians by the *Jews*, whoſe hatred he himſelf had experienced during his ſtay in *Theſſalonica*, finding them the bittereſt enemies of the Goſpel. III. He ſhews the deſire he had to ſee the *Theſſalonians*, and his ardent affection towards them.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE miniſters of the Goſpel ſhould learn by St. *Paul*'s example to exerciſe their office with integrity; to preach the pure word of God without any motives of intereſt or vain glory; to make appear in all their actions, an entire diſintereſtedneſs, and a perfect meekneſs; to behave themſelves piouſly and without reproach, and continually to exhort Chriſtians to a conduct worthy of God, who calls them to his kingdom, and to his glory. II. We ſee in this chapter, that the duty of thoſe to whom the pure word of God is preached, is to receive it as the *Theſſalonians* did, not as the word of man, but as the word of God, and not to be diſcouraged at the oppoſition and the perſecutions which they might be expoſed to; but to bear them with the ſame conſtancy as St. *Paul* and the *Theſſalonians* endured thoſe which the *Jews* raiſed againſt them. III. St. *Paul* complains, that the *Jews* were the avowed enemies of the Goſpel, that they prevented, as much as they could, its progreſs among the heathens, and that by this means they filled up the meaſure of their iniquities, and drew down the divine vengeance more and more upon them. We have great reaſon to deplore the obſtinacy of the *Jews*, who continue to this day in the ſame infidelity, feeling the effects of God's wrath, and to pray for their converſion. We ſee moreover that there have been in all times perſons that oppoſed *Chriſt*'s kingdom, and therefore we muſt not be ſurpriſed, if we find the like among Chriſtians. Laſtly, We ſee in this chapter, the moſt extraordinary and moſt affecting marks of St. *Paul*'s love and eſteem for the *Theſſalonians*. Paſtors, who are animated with the

the ſame ſpirit as this holy apoſtle, have the moſt tender affection for thoſe committed to their charge; there is no joy comparable to that which they feel when they ſee the fruit of their miniſtry; and as the faithful are all their hope, and all their joy in this world, they will alſo be their crown of glory at the coming of our Lord and Saviour *Jeſus Chriſt*.

CHAP. III.

THE apoſtle ſpeaks in this chapter, I. Of the care he took to ſend *Timothy* from *Athens* to *Theſſalonica*, to be informed of the condition of the *Theſſalonians*, and to ſtrengthen them. II. Of the great comfort he received from *Timothy*, at his return, brought him the good news of their remembrance of him, and their perſeverance in the faith; on which occaſion he prays very earneſtly for them.

REFLECTIONS.

I. WHAT is chiefly to be obſerved here, is, that St. *Paul*, in his great love for the *Theſſalonians*, was not eaſy till he had ſent *Timothy* to know how they did, and to confirm them in the faith. This behaviour of St. *Paul*, ſhews the great concern true paſtors have for their flocks. Their love for the Lord *Jeſus*, and for thoſe who hear his voice, makes them to be continually employed in the ſupply of their wants, and in providing for their edification by all poſſible means. II. The extraordinary comfort St. *Paul* felt, at being informed by *Timothy* of the perſeverance and happy ſtate of the *Theſſalonians*, and the thanks he renders to God on this account, are expreſſed in ſuch ſtrong terms, as denote the moſt lively ſenſe of joy, tenderneſs, and eſteem. This apoſtle aſſures them, he could not ſufficiently bleſs the Lord for that exceſs of joy he felt when he thought on them. Nothing more ſenſibly affects the faithful ſervants of *Jeſus Chriſt*, nor gives them greater pleaſure than when they ſee the faith and piety of thoſe over whom

whom God has appointed them; this being always the principal ſubject of their prayers and thankſgivings. All Chriſtians ſhould have the ſame ſentiments, and labour for the ſame end, with their utmoſt zeal, for the conſolation of their ſpiritual guides, as well as for the glory of God and their own ſalvation. This is expreſſed in this prayer of St. *Paul: The Lord make you to increaſe and abound in love one towards another, to the end he may ſtabliſh your hearts unblameable in holineſs before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt with all his ſaints.*

CHAP. IV.

THERE are two things to be obſerved in this chapter: I. Exhortations to a holy life, and eſpecially to chaſtity and charity. II. St. *Paul* ſhews, that Chriſtians ought not to grieve exceſſively for the dead; and, in this view, he ſpeaks of what ſhall happen both to the dead and thoſe which ſhall be alive at the laſt day, and how they ſhall be taken up into heaven.

REFLECTIONS.

ST. *Paul* teaches us, in this chapter, I. That the chief duty of Chriſtians is, to behave themſelves in ſuch a manner as is agreeable to God; to keep the commandments we have received from the Lord, and to abound more and more in piety. II. St. *Paul*, as uſual, warns the *Theſſalonians* in very clear and ſtrong terms againſt impurity, becauſe this vice was very common among the heathens, eſpecially in great cities, ſuch as *Theſſalonica*. He ſays, that the will of God is, that we ſhould be holy; that we ſhould avoid impurity and evil concupiſcence; that every one ſhould know how to keep his body in chaſtity; that nobody ought to violate the rules of modeſty, of charity, and of juſtice, to gratify the inordinate deſires of the fleſh; and that God is the avenger of thoſe ſins, ſince he has not called us to uncleanneſs,

but

but to holineſs. III. St. *Paul* teaches us two things concerning charity; one is, that true Chriſtians do not need to be exhorted to charity, ſince they are taught by God to love one another, and to aſſiſt their brethren; and the other, that in order to exerciſe charity, every one ought to keep within the bounds of his calling, to apply himſelf to his own buſineſs, and to avoid idleneſs and curioſity, which is a way of life inconſiſtent with piety and Chriſtianity. Laſtly, We ſee in this chapter, that we ought not to afflict ourſelves for the dead, *as men without hope*, ſince we know that thoſe who die in the Lord, ſhall riſe again, and be carried up into heaven upon the clouds to meet the Lord, together with thoſe who ſhall be then alive. This doctrine ought to comfort us for the death of ſuch perſons as are dear to us, when we have reaſon to believe them in the number of the faithful; to confirm ourſelves againſt the fear of death, and to excite us to live to the Lord, to the end, that dying likewiſe in him, we may be raiſed again one day, to be eternally united to him in the heavenly glory.

CHAP. V.

I. ST. *Paul* having, at the end of the preceding chapter, ſpoke of *Chriſt*'s coming, ſays, that the time of his coming was unknown and uncertain; and exhorts Chriſtians to prepare themſelves for it by ſobriety and watchfulneſs. II. He preſcribes to the *Theſſalonians* ſeveral duties of piety. III. He concludes his Epiſtle, by praying God for their ſanctification, and recommending himſelf to their prayers.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter teaches us, I. That the day of the Lord will come in a very ſudden manner, ſurpriſing men when they leaſt expect it; that it will be a day of terror for thoſe who walk in darkneſs, and give themſelves up to the works of the fleſh; but that that day will be full of comfort to believers; and that therefore

therefore the way not to be ſurprized by it, is to prepare ourſelves for it by a ſober and mortified life, by faith, by the practice of charity, and all kind of good works. St. *Paul* next preſcribes ſeveral particular duties, ſuch as, firſt, the edifying and exhorting one another by good diſcourſes. II. He ſpeaks in the ſtrongeſt terms of the reſpect and love due to the paſtors and governors of the church, for their works' ſake. III. He commands us to live in peace one with another; adviſing, comforting, and forbearing each other; and avoiding revenge. He adds ſeveral ſentences, which are ſo many excellent precepts; ſuch as to rejoice always with ſpiritual joy; to pray continually; to give thanks to God in all things; not to quench the gifts of the Spirit, either in others, or in ourſelves; to try all things, and hold faſt that which is good; and to avoid all appearance of evil. Theſe are ſo many holy rules which we ſhould never loſe ſight of, and which we ſhould endeavour to put in practice; adding always prayer to our endeavours, and with St. *Paul*, beſeeching God *to ſanctify intirely our whole ſpirit, and ſoul, and body, and preſerve them blameleſs unto the coming of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.* Amen.

The End of the firſt Epiſtle of St. PAUL *to the* THESSALONIANS.

THE

SECOND EPISTLE OF ST. PAUL

TO THE

THESSALONIANS.

ARGUMENT.

This Epiſtle was wrote a little after the former, about the year of Chriſt *fifty-two. It conſiſts of three chapters. In the firſt St.* Paul *encourages the* Theſſalonians *againſt perſecution. In the ſecond, He corrects their notions concerning the approach of the laſt day. And in the third, He exhorts them to live according to the purity of the Goſpel.*

CHAP. I.

I. ST. *Paul* gives thanks to God, that the faith and charity of the *Theſſalonians* increaſed more and more, and that they perſevered in the midſt of the perſecutions they ſuffered. II. He aſſures them, that God would not fail to puniſh perſecutors, and thoſe who did not obey the Goſpel, and that he would crown the faithful with everlaſting glory at the coming of our Lord *Jeſus Chriſt*. III. He beſeeches God to confirm the *Theſſalonians*, and to make them increaſe in faith and holineſs.

REFLEC-

REFLECTIONS *after reading the chapter.*

I. WE ſee in this Epiſtle, that the church of *Theſſalonica*, which St. *Paul* had ſo much commended in the former Epiſtle, did more and more abound in faith, charity, and the gifts of the Holy Ghoſt; that St. *Paul*'s affection for this church was continually encreaſing, and was the ſubject of his joy and thankſgivings. It is the great glory of the church to be continually improving, and the greateſt ſatisfaction to its miniſters to be able to ſay of the people committed to their charge, what St. *Paul* teſtifies of the faithful of *Theſſalonica*: II. This chapter teaches us, that Chriſtians, far from being diſcouraged by thoſe afflictions to which the profeſſion of the Goſpel expoſes them, are thereby better qualified to enter into the kingdom of God; that ſuch afflictions are a proof of his righteous judgment, and that the Lord will come to give reſt and eaſe to ſuch as have been expoſed to them; and to exerciſe vengeance againſt perſecutors, and all thoſe who obey not the Goſpel of *Chriſt*. This doctrine ought to produce in us patience, and even joy in our afflictions; a lively ſenſe and dread of the judgment of God, and a conſtant endeavour to pleaſe him. The prayer St. *Paul* makes for the confirmation of the *Theſſalonians* in faith and the grace of God, ſhews that we muſt perſevere in goodneſs, and aim more and more at perfection. This ſhould be our chief care and the ſubject of our prayers, as St. *Paul* exhorts us in the following words: *We pray always for you, that our God would render you worthy of his calling, and fulfil in you all the good pleaſure of his goodneſs, and the work of faith with power; that the name of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt may be glorified by you, and you by him, according to the grace of our God, and the Lord Jeſus Chriſt.*

CHAP. II.

I. ST. *Paul*, that he might undeceive the *Theſſalonians*, in the opinion ſome had entertained, that the day of the Lord which he had been ſpeaking of would ſoon come, foretels, that before the coming of that day, there would be an apoſtacy in the church, occaſioned by the man of ſin, and the ſon of perdition. II. He deſcribes his characters, the place, the time, the manner of his manifeſtation, the progreſs he would make, and, laſtly, his deſtruction. The apoſtle adds exhortations and prayers in behalf of the *Theſſalonians*.

REFLECTIONS.

THE prophecy contained in this chapter is very remarkable, but ſomewhat obſcure. St. *Paul* foretels that there would happen an almoſt general defection in the church, before the day of the Lord ſhould come. It has been generally believed, that this prophecy foretold the coming of Antichriſt; but it is difficult to explain all the circumſtances of this prophecy. It is naturally enough applied to what happened ſome time after the death of the apoſtles; when ignorance, error, corruption, tyranny, and all ſuperſtitions and diſorders of every kind, were introduced into the church, and reigned therein for ſeveral ages; but this prophecy does likewiſe ſhew, that this apoſtacy and extreme corruption ſhould not laſt always, and that the Lord would put an end to it, by his infinite power. God was pleaſed that this event ſhould be foretold, that we ſhould not be ſurpriſed at it, and the faithful ſhould be upon their guard. It muſt likewiſe be obſerved, after St. *Paul*, that if there have been and ſtill are ſome people, who have ſuffered themſelves to be led away by error, it is the juſt judgment of God, becauſe they did not love the truth, and becauſe they took pleaſure in vice; but thoſe whom God has enlightened with the pure light of the Goſpel, ought *to give him thanks, becauſe he has from the beginning choſen them to ſalvation*,

tion, and the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt; ſtanding faſt in the doctrine they have received; and praying the Lord to ſanctify them entirely, and to eſtabliſh them in every good word and work.

CHAP. III.

I. ST. *Paul* exhorts the *Theſſalonians* to pray for him, and for the progreſs of the Goſpel; and he alſo prays for them. II. He orders them to withdraw from thoſe who lead a wicked life, and to have no communication with them; and he blames thoſe particularly that lived in idleneſs. III. He concludes his Epiſtle with prayers for the faithful of *Theſſalonica*.

REFLECTIONS.

THERE are three principal reflections to be made on this chapter: I. The firſt is, that zeal for the glory of God obliges all Chriſtians to pray for the propagation of the Goſpel, and for thoſe faithful miniſters that preach it; who, on their part, ought likewiſe to pray for the church and all its members. II. The ſecond is, that if there be any in the church, who lead a diſorderly life, and do not behave themſelves according to the commands of our Saviour, we ought not to conſider them as our brethren, but withdraw ourſelves from them. This is what St. *Paul* expreſsly orders in the name of *Chriſt*, and what is enjoined in ſeveral places of the New Teſtament. Whereby it appears, that diſcipline ſhould be exerciſed; that ſcandalous ſinners ought not to be eſteemed members of the church; and that Chriſtians ſhould avoid all intercourſe with them. III. It is to be obſerved, that the apoſtle particularly condemns thoſe who, inſtead of employing themſelves, and labouring in an honeſt calling, ſpend their lives in idleneſs, in curioſity, and frivolous engagements. It appears from what St. *Paul* ſays on this head, that this kind of life, generally very common in cities, and which the world looks upon as innocent,

nocent, is utterly unworthy of Chriſtians; and that thoſe who follow it do not deſerve even to live, ſince the apoſtle has expreſsly declared, *that if any would not work, neither ſhould he eat.*

The End of the Second Epiſtle of St. PAUL *to the* THESSALONIANS.

THE

THE

FIRST EPISTLE OF ST. PAUL

TO

TIMOTHY.

ARGUMENT.

St. Paul *is thought to have written this Epiſtle in the year of our Lord ſixty-four, to* Timothy, *whom he had left at* Epheſus, *to take care of the church in that city. His deſign was to exhort* Timothy *to oppoſe the falſe teachers; and to inſtruct him how biſhops and paſtors ought to govern the church of God.*

CHAP. I.

I. IN this chapter, the apoſtle orders *Timothy* to hinder certain *Jewiſh* doctors from corrupting the doctrine of *Chriſt*, by ſubtle, profane, and extravagant notions, and introducing diſputes in the church. II. And becauſe theſe doctors ſhewed great zeal for the law, he informs him what is the true uſe of the law. III. This gives him occaſion to ſpeak of the goodneſs of God in calling him to the office of an apoſtle, and in general, of the mercy of God towards ſinners. IV. And laſtly, he exhorts *Timothy* to diſcharge the duties of his function with courage, and to oppoſe falſe teachers.

REFLEC-

REFLECTIONS *after reading the chapter.*

THE inſtructions contained in this chapter are the following: I. That the duty of miniſters is to teach and preſerve ſound doctrine, and to oppoſe ſuch as would alter it, by teaching falſe or vain doctrines, and ſuch as are only fit to raiſe diſputes and troubles in the church. II. That *the end of the commandment is charity*, ſuch as proceeds *out of a pure heart, and of a good conſcience, and of faith unfeigned;* and that thoſe who turn aſide from this end, loſe themſelves in uſeleſs diſcourſes. By this rule we may judge whether the doctrines preached are true, and whether we ourſelves are in the number of true and ſincere Chriſtians. III. That the law, conſidered as prohibiting the groſſeſt crimes, was not ſo properly given to good men, who abhor thoſe crimes; from whence it follows, that though it be not aboliſhed, there is no longer the ſame uſe for it, in reſpect to Chriſtians, as formerly; ſince the Goſpel trains men up to the moſt perfect holineſs, and to obey God from a principle of love. IV. St. *Paul* teaches us here, *that Chriſt Jeſus came into the world to ſave ſinners*, which he confirms by his own example. This is a doctrine full of comfort for thoſe ſinners that are truly penitent. But what St. *Paul* ſays here, well deſerves our notice, namely, that God had ſhewn him mercy, becauſe in perſecuting the church, and blaſpheming the name of *Jeſus Chriſt*, he had done it through ignorance and unbelief. We may learn from hence, that it is more eaſy to obtain pardon for thoſe ſins that are committed through ignorance, than thoſe that are committed wilfully, and contrary to the knowledge we have of the will of God. Laſtly, We ſee in this chapter, that our chief care ought to be, to have a good conſcience; ſince in loſing that we loſe the faith, and fall into the utmoſt obdurateneſs.

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

I. THE apoſtle directs that prayer ſhould be made in the church for all men, and particularly for kings and magiſtrates, though at that time they were heathens; and he founds this order upon the will of God, who would have all men to be ſaved; and that it was for that purpoſe he ſent his Son into the world, and cauſed the Goſpel to be preached. II. He ſays, that men ought to pray in a ſpirit of peace and purity; and that women ſhould be preſent at the aſſemblies of the church in modeſt apparel, and continue in reſpect and ſilence.

REFLECTIONS.

FROM this chapter we learn, I. That it is a very neceſſary duty in religion, to make public prayers for the ſalvation of all men, and particularly for kings, and thoſe that are in authority. And therefore that theſe prayers are an eſſential part of the Chriſtian worſhip. II. That the goodneſs of God towards men is ſo great, that he deſires that all ſhould be ſaved; for which end he has given his Son *Chriſt Jeſus* to be a mediator between God and men. This likewiſe obliges us to deſire the ſalvation of all men, to love, and to pray for them. III. That no prayers can be acceptable to God, that do not proceed from a pure heart, and from a ſpirit of charity and peace, free from wrath and litigiouſneſs. Beſides this, the apoſtle gives Chriſtian women three inſtructions: The firſt is, to be clothed decently and modeſtly, as it becomes women that profeſs to ſerve God; to ſhun immodeſty, and exceſs of ornaments; and to obſerve theſe rules chiefly when they attend the religious aſſemblies. The ſecond is, to remain in ſilence and ſubmiſſion to their huſbands at home, as well as in the church. And the third, that they ſhall be ſaved, if they take care of the children they bring into the world; if they educate them in piety; and if they themſelves continue in faith, charity, holineſs, and modeſty.

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

ST. *Paul* ſpeaks in this chapter, I. Of the importance of the office of a biſhop and paſtor, and of the qualities which thoſe ought to have who are admitted into this office. II. Of the office of deacons, whoſe buſineſs it was to diſtribute the alms of the church, and to aſſiſt the biſhops in their office; and he ſhews likewiſe how deacons ought to be qualified. III. To engage *Timothy* to admit none into any eccleſiaſtical employ but thoſe who were worthy of it, and to govern the church as he ought, he repreſents to him the dignity of the church of God, and the excellency of the doctrine taught therein.

REFLECTIONS.

WHAT St. *Paul* ſays of the excellency of the office of a biſhop, and of the qualifications that are required in ſuch as aſpire to or exerciſe that office, ſhews, that it is of divine inſtitution, and of the higheſt importance. This is what paſtors ought moſt ſeriouſly to conſider, that they may render themſelves worthy of ſo holy a function; not only by avoiding all thoſe faults that might render their miniſtry unfruitful, and living in ſuch a manner, as to give no juſt occaſion of reproach; but moreover, by an edifying behaviour, and by giving an example of all kind of virtues. II. From the rules here preſcribed by St. *Paul*, it appears that it is not right to admit into holy orders any but perſons of an unblameable character, and ſuch as are able to teach, and govern the church of God. III. All Chriſtians are to conſider, that ſince this office is of ſo great conſequence, and the ſalvation of ſouls and the glory of God depend on it, the character of paſtors ſhould be eſteemed venerable and ſacred in the church; and thoſe who are inveſted with it, and behave worthy of it, ought to be had in reverence. As for deacons, it appears from this chapter, that their order, which was eſtabliſhed ſoon after our Lord's aſcenſion,

aſcenſion, was preſerved in all churches, as well as that of biſhops; and beſides the great uſe of thoſe offices in which the deacons were employed, this order was of great ſervice in forming good paſtors; the apoſtle having eſtabliſhed a ſubordination, and appointed that no one ſhould be raiſed to the office of biſhop but by degrees; and that the biſhops ſhould be taken from among the deacons, who had faithfully diſcharged that office. By this means none were placed at the head of the church, but perſons well known, and of a ſufficient age and experience. It is a great misfortune that this excellent order and ſubordination is not obſerved in all churches. Laſtly, What the apoſtle ſays of the dignity of the church of the living God, and of the excellency of the doctrine taught therein, ought to be ſeriouſly conſidered, as well by thoſe that govern the church as by all the faithful; that ſo both one and the other may be thereby ſtirred up to reverence the church of *Chriſt*, and to remain inviolably attached to it, and to diſcharge their duty, every one according to his condition and calling.

CHAP. IV.

I. THE apoſtle warns *Timothy* that there would appear falſe teachers, who would condemn marriage, and the uſe of certain meats. II. He exhorts them to teach pure doctrine, and to adhere to true piety, the great advantage of which he repreſents to him. III. He recommends to him, ſo to behave as to procure reſpect to his miniſtry, notwithſtanding his youth, and apply himſelf diligently to all his duties.

REFLECTIONS.

THAT we may improve by this chapter, we muſt obſerve, I. That according to the prediction of St. *Paul*, there did ariſe falſe teachers, who forbad marriage, and the uſe of meats, and introduced many other errors in religion, not only in the primitive church, but likewiſe in the following ages. This

ſhould convince us how important it is to avoid error and ſuperſtition, and never to depart from the doctrine of the Goſpel; but it muſt likewiſe be remembered, that what St. *Paul* here ſays, does by no means authorize libertiniſm and ſenſuality; and that God's creatures muſt be uſed with moderation and with thankſgiving. II. As the impoſtors St. *Paul* ſpeaks of were carnal men, whoſe aim was to grow rich and enjoy the conveniencies of life, and who made religion ſubſervient to their intereſts; St. *Paul* aſſures *Timothy* that true piety is the moſt profitable thing in the world, *having the promiſe of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come;* and that God, who takes care of all men, does particularly provide for his faithful ſervants. This is an undoubted truth, and teaches us, that the only way to be happy in this life, and in that which is to come, is the practice of ſolid piety. III. St. *Paul* ſhews in this chapter that it is the duty of the miniſters of the Goſpel, to preach pure doctrine; to be always exerciſed in godlineſs, to behave in ſuch a manner as none may have any reaſon to deſpiſe them; to be patterns of faith, holineſs, purity, and all kind of virtues, both in their words and in their actions; to cultivate their gifts by labour and ſtudy, and by a diligent application to the functions of their office, ſo that all the world may be witneſs of their progreſs, and *that they may ſave themſelves, and thoſe who hear them.* Theſe leſſons of inſtruction, as they firſt regard paſtors, and demand their moſt ſerious attention; ſo they ſhould engage all Chriſtians to make a good uſe of the miniſtry of their ſpiritual guides; and to beſeech God that he would ſanctify thoſe who exerciſe this holy office, that they may diſcharge all theſe duties to the glory of God, and to the edification of his church.

CHAP. V.

ST. *Paul* directs *Timothy* how to conduct himſelf in reproving and admoniſhing, and in receiving widows

widows that were maintained at the expence of the church, and who ſerved in ſeveral charitable employments; upon which occaſion he ſhews the duty of women, and the faults they are to avoid. II. He ſpeaks next of the duty of honouring and maintaining paſtors, and what rules are to be obſerved when they were accuſed, or when any one was to be ordained to that office.

REFLECTIONS.

I. WHAT is ſaid in this chapter, is a leſſon to the paſtors of the church, to diſpenſe their exhortations with prudence, ſuiting them to the perſons to whom they are addreſſed, and to behave in every reſpect with diſcretion, uprightneſs, and integrity. II. The rules which St. *Paul* preſcribes concerning widows who were in the ſervice of the church, ſhew that every thing ſhould be done with order in the church of *Chriſt*, particularly works of charity; that the diſtribution of alms, and the care of holy things, ſhould be committed to none but perſons of gravity and piety; and that thoſe who can aſſiſt their poor relations, are under an obligation to do it. III. We ſee here, that aged women ought to apply themſelves to works of piety and charity, and to give young women good inſtructions, and ſet them good example: and that to be idle, buſy-bodies, tattlers, and to gad from houſe to houſe, is a life unworthy of Chriſtian women, whom God requires to be diſcreet, modeſt, chaſte, and retired, and to take care of their families. IV. The order St. *Paul* gives *Timothy*, to reprove publickly thoſe that ſin, confirms the neceſſity of church diſcipline and publick cenſures. Laſtly, We may gather from this whole chapter, that the miniſtry is a very important office; that it requires a great deal of prudence, knowledge, and integrity; that therefore we ought to be very circumſpect and deliberate in admitting perſons to ſo holy a miniſtry; as on the other hand we ſhould not lightly accuſe or condemn thoſe who exerciſe it.

CHAP.

CHAP. VI.

MENTION is made in this chapter, I. Of the duties of ſervants towards their maſters: II. Of falſe teachers, who taught a different doctrine from that of St. *Paul*, and of the miſchief they cauſed in the church, by raiſing diſputes in it. III. And becauſe theſe falſe teachers acted only with a view to their intereſt, St. *Paul* ſpeaks of content of mind, and of the evils that proceed from the love of riches. IV. He calls upon *Timothy* with great earneſtneſs to obſerve all he had directed him, to preſerve purity of doctrine, and to ſhun vain diſputes.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE care St. *Paul* takes to ſet forth the duty of ſervants, after that of paſtors, ſhews, that God deſires the ſalvation of all, and that he has no reſpect to the difference of mens condition. This ſhews likewiſe, that ſervants ought to be faithful, and in ſubjection to their maſters, and to conſider, that if in the time of St. *Paul*, the ſlaves, whoſe maſters were heathens, were obliged to this duty, thoſe who ſerve Chriſtian maſters are under a much ſtricter obligation. II. We ſhould ſeriouſly reflect upon what is here ſaid about nice and uſeleſs queſtions and diſputes, and againſt thoſe who give way to them, whom the apoſtle deſcribes as full of pride, men of corrupt hearts, who occaſioned miſchiefs innumerable in the church. This ſhould inſpire teachers, and all Chriſtians, with an extreme averſion to diſputes of this kind; and engage them as St. *Paul* adviſes, to avoid thoſe who raiſe them, and thoſe who encourage them. III. A third inſtruction contained in this chapter is, *That godlineſs with contentment is great gain: That we brought nothing into this world, and that it is certain we can carry nothing out: That having food and raiment, we ought to be therewith content.* This is a leſſon of great importance, and tends very much to produce

duce tranquillity of mind, and to ſecure us from thoſe temptations which a neglect of this rule expoſes us to. IV. The apoſtle confirms this leſſon by reminding us, *That the love of money is the root of all evil; that they that will be rich, fall into temptation, and a ſnare, and into many fooliſh and hurtful luſts, which drown men in deſtruction and perdition.* This is a truth which is taught us by the word of God, and confirmed by every day's experience. Let us never forget this leſſon; let us always remember theſe excellent and wholeſome inſtructions. V. St. *Paul* exhorts thoſe who have worldly goods, not to be proud, not to truſt in uncertain riches, but to be rich in good works, that they may lay up treaſure for the time to come, and obtain everlaſting life. Theſe are duties which the Goſpel requires of all Chriſtians who have this world's goods, which they ought never to forget. Laſtly, the grave and ſolemn manner in which St. *Paul* requires *Timothy* to fulfil all the duties of his office, and to keep faithfully that which was committed to his care, ſhould engage all thoſe that exerciſe the holy miniſtry to redouble their zeal, and to acquit themſelves of their duty with ſuch fidelity, that *having fought the good fight of faith, they may lay hold on eternal life, and be without rebuke until the appearing of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt;* who in due time ſhall be manifeſted to be *the bleſſed and only potentate, King of kings, and Lord of lords: who only hath immortality; dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath ſeen, nor can ſee; to whom be honour and power everlaſting.* Amen.

The End of the Firſt Epiſtle of St. PAUL *to* TIMOTHY.

THE

THE

SECOND EPISTLE OF ST. PAUL

TO

TIMOTHY.

ARGUMENT.

The apoſtle St. Paul *writ this Epiſtle in the year of* Chriſt *ſixty-ſix, whilſt he was the ſecond time priſoner at* Rome, *and a little before he ſuffered martyrdom. In this Epiſtle he renews the exhortations he had before addreſſed to* Timothy, *charging him faithfully to diſcharge with ſtill greater zeal the duties of his office.*

CHAP. I.

I. IN this chapter St. *Paul* expreſſes his tender affection to *Timothy*, whoſe faith and godlineſs he commends. II. He exhorts him to double his zeal, and not to be diſcouraged by the afflictions to which the faithful, and eſpecially the miniſters of the Goſpel, were expoſed; and always to retain the pure doctrine of *Jeſus Chriſt*. III. He complains of thoſe that had forſaken him, and prays to God for the family of *Oneſiphorus*, which took care of him when he was a priſoner at *Rome*.

REFLEC-

REFLECTIONS *after reading the chapter.*

ST. *Paul*'s commendation, at the beginning of this Epiſtle, of the piety which *Timothy* had ſhewn even from his youth, and in which he was educated by his mother and grandmother, is a proof of the great happineſs of a Chriſtian education; and that thoſe parents who inſpire their children with holineſs, do beſtow upon them the greateſt of all bleſſings. But St. *Paul*'s exhortation to *Timothy*, to ſtir up more and more the gift of God which was in him, and to perſevere in the faith, do likewiſe ſhew, that thoſe who have been religiouſly educated, and have made a happy beginning, ought carefully to preſerve that heavenly gift, endeavour to increaſe it, and make a conſtant profeſſion of piety, without ever being aſhamed of it, or without being diſcouraged by the oppoſition they meet with. All Chriſtians ought to conſider theſe things, but it does, in a more particular manner, concern the miniſters of the Goſpel: and the example of *Timothy* teaches us, that it is a moſt valuable bleſſing to the church, when God ſets over it paſtors, who, like *Timothy*, have lived in piety from their youth, and whoſe zeal is always increaſing. Laſtly, The prayers which the apoſtle makes for *Oneſiphorus*, who had not forſaken him, like others, but had comforted him in his impriſonment, ſhew, that it is a work very acceptable to God to relieve the afflicted, and eſpecially ſuch as ſuffer for the Goſpel; and that thoſe who have done it will receive their reward, and find mercy from the Lord at the laſt day.

CHAP. II.

I. ST. *Paul* exhorts *Timothy* to undergo with courage the troubles that attended the exerciſe of his office. II. He recommends to him, to preach the pure word of God, and to oppoſe idle and profane diſputes, which he repreſents the pernicious con-

ſequences of, by comparing them to a gangrene, which ſpreads more and more, and by ſhewing that they were likely to engage men in fatal errors, as it happened to certain falſe teachers at that time, who denied the reſurrection. III. The apoſtle adds, that nevertheleſs there were always ſome faithful teachers and Chriſtians, that kept themſelves free from theſe errors; and that the character which they are known by, is their abſtaining from ſin. IV. And laſtly, He orders *Timothy* to avoid youthful luſts, to reſtrain diſputes, and labour to bring back thoſe that were fallen into error.

REFLECTIONS.

WHAT is contained in this chapter directly concerns the miniſters of the Goſpel. They may here ſee, that their office calls them to ſerve *Chriſt* faithfully, and to this end to devote themſelves to him entirely, without engaging him in the buſineſs of this life; to bear the fatigue attending their office; to promote the edification of the church; to baniſh error and diſputes; and to cauſe truth, piety, and concord to reign in it; to preſerve peace with all thoſe who call upon the Lord with a pure heart; and laſtly, to endeavour with zeal, meekneſs, and patience, to recover thoſe that are engaged in error or vice. Beſides theſe reflections, which concern the rulers of the church in particular, we ſhould make theſe three general remarks; firſt, that the character of Chriſtians which we bear, and the vow we made of renouncing the world, in order to devote ourſelves to the ſervice of *Chriſt*, calls upon us to renounce every thing that may hinder us from being faithful to him; and obliges us to do and to ſuffer every thing for the love of him; remembering, that *if we ſuffer, we ſhall alſo reign with him: if we deny him, he will alſo deny us.* Secondly, We ſee, moreover, in this chapter, that it is dangerous to hearken to thoſe who diſturb the peace of the church, and ſpread errors therein; and that therefore every one ought

to

to be upon his guard, and never depart from the doctrine which is taught in the word of God, and to be always animated with a ſpirit of unity and peace. Laſtly, All Chriſtians ſhould carefully remember theſe words of St. *Paul*, which contain at one view the ſubſtance of religion, *viz.* That *the Lord knoweth them that are his;* that the tokens by which he knows them is, that they *depart from iniquity*; that in the church, there are veſſels of honour, and veſſels of diſhonour; that is to ſay, there are good and bad men; and that *if a man purge himſelf from ſin, he ſhall be a veſſel unto honour, ſanctified, and meet for the maſter's uſe, and prepared unto every good work.*

CHAP. III.

I. ST. *Paul* foretels that great corruption would creep into the church, by the means of falſe teachers and perſons who would corrupt the doctrine and practice of Chriſtianity. II. He exhorts *Timothy* to ſhun ſuch people, whoſe deſtruction he foretels; to imitate his conduct and patience under afflictions, and chiefly to adhere to the doctrine contained in the Holy Scriptures, the divine authority and uſefulneſs of which he confirms.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE prophecy which we read in this chapter, and which ſhews that in the latter days there would be perilous times, is very remarkable. It was fulfilled during the lives of the apoſtles, and in the ſucceeding ages; ſince ſeveral dangerous ſects ſprung up, who, together with damnable errors, introduced impiety and licentiouſneſs. This prophecy extends even to this time, ſince we ſee ſo many Chriſtians, who have nothing but the form of godlineſs, denying the power thereof, being engaged in wickedneſs and diſorders of every kind. Since this great corruption was foretold we ſhould not be ſtaggered at it; on the contrary, we ought to be thereby the more confirmed in the truth.

God has thought fit to warn us of it, that we may not ſuffer ourſelves to be drawn away by evil examples; but that following the exhortation of St. *Paul*, we ſhould reſiſt ſin, and flee from thoſe that are guilty of it: This is the duty of all Chriſtians, and particularly of the miniſters of the Goſpel. II. This chapter teaches us, that if whilſt we do our duty, by withſtanding vice and impiety, we ſhould be expoſed to the contradiction of ſinners, there is nothing more will befal us than what formerly happened to *Moſes*, to St. *Paul*, and moſt of the ſaints; becauſe, as St. *Paul* obſerves on this occaſion, *thoſe that will live godly in Chriſt Jeſus ſhall ſuffer perſecution.* But this ſhould be ſo far from diſcouraging us, that it ought to animate us the more in the diſcharge of our duty. Laſtly, The apoſtle teaches us, that the way to ſecure ourſelves and others from ſin and error, is never to depart from the holy Scriptures, which alone are able to make us wiſe unto ſalvation, through faith in *Chriſt Jeſus*. And thoſe who are called into the church to guide and inſtruct others, ſhould take notice that it was by reading and meditating on theſe divine books, that *Timothy* became ſo excellent a miniſter of *Chriſt*; and in them they will find, at St. *Paul* ſays, every thing neceſſary to qualify them for the diſcharge of their holy office.

CHAP. IV.

I. ST. *Paul* continues to exhort *Timothy* with great earneſtneſs to diſcharge all the duties of his office. And, II. That he may the more effectually engage him thereto, he tells him his death was drawing near; for which he expreſſes great joy, and a firm hope of the glory of heaven. III. He orders *Timothy* to come and ſee him as ſoon as poſſible, complains of thoſe who had forſaken him, and concludes this Epiſtle with ſalutations and affectionate wiſhes.

REFLEC-

REFLECTIONS.

I. THOSE whom God calls to the holy miniſtry, have, in this chapter, powerful motives to diſcharge all the parts of their duty, and eſpecially to preach the word of God, to reprove, and in all ſeaſons to exhort with zeal, with evidence, and with meekneſs. This they are engaged to do by thoſe grave admonitions which St. *Paul* addreſſes to *Timothy*, charging him before God, and from the conſideration of the laſt judgment, to redouble his zeal and watchfulneſs. II. St. *Paul* here informs the miniſters of the Goſpel, that times of danger often come, when men diſlike the purity and ſimplicity of the Chriſtian doctrine, cannot bear the truth, and love to hear ſuch doctrines as flatter their curioſity, and eſpecially their paſſions. Which ſhews, that thoſe who are called to inſtruct others, have need of the utmoſt prudence and fidelity to diſcharge the duties of their office in a proper manner, and with good ſucceſs. III. The joy and confidence which this apoſtle ſhewed at the time he was going to ſuffer martyrdom, is a proof to us of the great courage and conſtancy wherewith thoſe that have ſerved God faithfully are animated when their death draws near. And ſince St. *Paul* declares, that the crown of righteouſneſs was reſerved not only for him, but likewiſe for all thoſe who love the appearance of their Lord and Saviour, we ought always to imitate this apoſtle in the zeal and love which he teſtified for *Chriſt;* we ought to fight the good fight, to finiſh our courſe, and to keep the faith, even to the end. IV. The complaints St. *Paul* makes againſt thoſe who had forſaken him, and thoſe who had uſed him ill, ſhew, that there have been at all times, ſome who have oppoſed the faithful ſervants of God; and that even in the boſom of the church there are worldly men, who love the preſent world better than *Chriſt*; as alſo fearful and cowardly perſons, that durſt not make an open profeſſion of piety, nor ſtand by thoſe who maintain it. Laſtly, We ſee by what St. *Paul* here ſays of what hap-

happened to him at *Rome*, that though the faithful are without ſupport in reſpect to the world, yet that God never forſakes them in trials and in dangers, but that he ſtrengthens them, and after having delivered them from all evil, he will ſave them in his heavenly kingdom.

The End of the Second Epiſtle of St. PAUL *to* TIMOTHY.

THE

THE

EPISTLE OF ST. PAUL

TO

TITUS.

ARGUMENT.

It is thought St. Paul *writ this Epiſtle about the year of* Chriſt *ſixty-four, to* Titus, *whom he had left in the iſland of* Crete, *now called* Candia, *to take care of the churches that were there.*

CHAP. I.

THIS chapter has two parts. I. St. *Paul* orders *Titus* to appoint paſtors in all the churches of the iſland of *Crete*, and deſcribes the qualities with which they ought to be endowed. II. He ſpeaks of certain *Jewiſh* doctors that added many trifling queſtions and fables to the doctrines of the Goſpel, particularly with regard to the uſe of meats; and who were, beſides this, of a vicious diſpoſition, like moſt of the inhabitants of the iſle of *Crete*.

REFLEC-

REFLECTIONS *after reading the chapter.*

SINCE St. *Paul* directs *Titus* to regulate all things in the churches of *Crete*, and particularly to ſettle paſtors there, it appears from hence, that it is the will of God that order ſhould be obſerved in the church: and particularly, that in every place where there are Chriſtians, there ſhould be paſtors, their office being of divine inſtitution, and of abſolute neceſſity; but the great precaution which he adviſes him to uſe in the choice of thoſe miniſters he was to appoint, proves, that that ſacred employment ought to be entruſted to none but perſons without reproach, and of an exemplary life, and who have withal the neceſſary gifts to teach, and preſerve the purity of the evangelical doctrine againſt ſuch as would corrupt it. We ſee, beſides, that it is the duty of the miniſters of *Chriſt* to ſet themſelves againſt falſe teachers, and ſuch as might ſeduce Chriſtians, and engage them in error or in ſin. The apoſtle's reflection upon the vicious diſpoſitions of the inhabitants of the iſle of *Crete*, whom he repreſents as addicted to lying, wickedneſs, ſloth, and ſenſuality, ſhews, that it is very difficult for ſuch as have an evil heart, and vicious inclinations, to become true diſciples of *Chriſt*; but that, however, the ſervants of God ought to neglect nothing to bring them to the faith. Laſtly, We ought ſeriouſly to reflect upon the deſcription the apoſtle here makes of the falſe teachers and wicked Chriſtians he is there ſpeaking of; ſaying, *They profeſs that they know God, but in works they deny him; being abominable, diſobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.* Theſe words are an exact repreſentation of many falſe Chriſtians, who live in the communion of the church; and teach us, that the profeſſion of religion, and faith in God, do not avail thoſe that live in diſobedience; and, as they renounce God by their works, he will not own them for his.

CHAP. II.

ST. *Paul* does two things in this chapter: I. He ſets forth the duties of old men and women; of young men and ſervants; and charges *Titus* to be himſelf to all theſe, and eſpecially to young people, an example of wiſdom and virtue. II. He gives us here an excellent abridgment of the Chriſtian doctrine, and ſhews what is the deſign of it.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THIS chapter teaches us, in general, that it is the great duty of paſtors to form the minds of men to piety and holineſs, and carefully to inſtruct all men in the duties peculiar to their ſtation and calling. II. Aged perſons may from hence learn to be ſober, grave, pious, and abounding in charity; Chriſtian women to live likewiſe in ſobriety; to avoid ſlander; to love their huſbands; to take care of their children and family: young people to be moderate, temperate, chaſte, and regular in their whole behaviour; and ſervants to be ſubject to their maſters, and ſerve them with fidelity. III. St. *Paul*'s earneſt addreſs to *Titus*, to be a pattern to others of purity, gravity, and good works, is an argument that thoſe who undertake to exhort and inſtruct others, ſhould firſt practiſe what they teach, and ſet men an example of all kind of virtues. IV. But we ought, all of us in general, carefully to attend to the ſummary of the Chriſtian doctrine St. *Paul* gives us in this chapter, in which he ſays, that the grace of God, that has been manifeſted by *Jeſus Chriſt*, calls us to renounce, not only ungodlineſs, and direct crimes, but likewiſe to renounce unlawful deſires, and the love of the world, and to live in temperance and purity with reſpect to ourſelves, in juſtice towards our neighbour, and in piety towards God; and that it is only by living thus, that we may expect with confidence the laſt and glorious coming of the great God and Saviour *Jeſus Chriſt*. This doctrine the miniſters of the

Goſpel

Goſpel ſhould preach, and this ſhould be the rule of every Chriſtian's conduct: This too is the end and deſign of *Chriſt*'s coming, and of his death; ſince, as St. *Paul* ſays, he gave himſelf for us, that he might *redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himſelf a peculiar people, zealous of good works.*

CHAP. III.

I. ST. *Paul* directs Chriſtians to ſubmit themſelves to the higher powers, to ſlander no body, and to abound in meekneſs and charity, even towards thoſe who were enemies of the Chriſtian Religion; and to remember, that God in his great mercy had ſaved them, when they likewiſe lived in all kind of irregularities. II. He orders *Titus* to recommend particularly the practice of good works to thoſe who had embraced Chriſtianity; to oppoſe ſuch as raiſed diſputes in the church by fooliſh queſtions; and to ſhun thoſe who formed ſects and parties, and broached falſe and dangerous doctrines; and he concludes with ſome directions which he gives to *Titus.*

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter teaches us, I. To be ſubject to kings and magiſtrates, to avoid calumny and diſputes, and to behave with perfect meekneſs towards all. II. St. *Paul* teaches us here, that *God has ſaved us, not by works of righteouſneſs which we have done, but according to his mercy,—through Jeſus Chriſt our Saviour. That being juſtified by his grace, we may be made heirs according to the hope of everlaſting life.* A moſt important doctrine, which ought to produce in us ſentiments of profound humility, and unfeigned thanks to God. III. The apoſtle in this chapter declares in the moſt poſitive manner, that there is nothing more certain, nor more important, nor which the miniſters of the Goſpel ought to inculcate and recommend with more earneſtneſs, than this, that *they which have believed in God, ſhould be careful to maintain good works.*

Theſe

Theſe things being good and profitable unto men. Theſe words ſhew, that the practice of good works is the moſt indiſpenſable duty of Chriſtianity, and the diſtinguiſhing mark of a true Chriſtian. Finally, We ſee here, that when there are perſons in the church who teach dangerous doctrines, and who form ſects and parties therein, we are to admoniſh them; and, if they continue to diſturb the peace of the church, we are not to own them for its members, nor to have any communication with them. This is the only method preſcribed by *Chriſt* and his apoſtles whereby to oppoſe error, and preſerve in the church purity of faith.

The End of the Epiſtle of St. PAUL *to* TITUS.

THE

THE

EPISTLE OF ST. PAUL

TO

PHILEMON.

ARGUMENT.

St. Paul *wrote this Epiſtle when he was a priſoner at* Rome *the firſt time, about the year of* Chriſt *ſixty-one, the ſubject of which was as follows:* Philemon, *who was of the city of* Coloſſe, *and who, after St.* Paul *had converted him to Chriſtianity, exerciſed his miniſtry in that city with great ſucceſs, had a ſlave, named* Oneſimus, *who ran away from him; and, coming to* Rome, *met with St.* Paul, *who converted him to the Chriſtian Religion; after which he ſent him back to* Philemon, *with a letter of recommendation, in which he intreats him to forgive* Oneſimus, *and to receive him as a brother in* Jeſus Chriſt.

REFLECTIONS.

WE ſee in this Epiſtle, I. That *Oneſimus* coming to *Rome*, after he had left his maſter *Philemon*, St. *Paul* laboured to convert this fugitive ſlave, and had the comfort to bring him over to the Chriſtian Faith. Thus this apoſtle embraced all occaſions of promoting the glory of God, and the ſalvation of men; as true Chriſtians are always ready to gain ſouls

ſouls to God, and to recover ſinners from the error of their ways. II. The apoſtle, after he had converted *Oneſimus*, ſent him back to his maſter, becauſe this ſlave's converſion no way deprived *Philemon* of his right over him; he intreated him to forgive him, and even offered to pay him all that *Oneſimus* owed him, and make ſatisfaction for all the wrong he might have done him. This whole proceeding of St. *Paul*, is a proof of his charity, meekneſs, juſtice, and integrity. Such is the character of good men; they are always concerned for thoſe who ſtand in need of their aſſiſtance, eſpecially for pious and godly men, or ſinners who return to their duty; and they are alſo animated with a ſpirit of juſtice and equity, and deſire to render to all their due. We may likewiſe make this farther reflection, that if St. *Paul* offered to ſatisfy *Philemon* for what *Oneſimus* owed him, though he was not obliged in ſtrictneſs to do it; thoſe who have done any wrong to others, are much more obliged to make it good. Laſtly, The order which St. *Paul* gives *Philemon*, to receive *Oneſimus* no longer as a ſlave, but as a brother, ſhews, that though Chriſtianity does not deſtroy the different relations among men, but ſuppoſes and admits a difference of condition; yet it makes all men equal before God, and with reſpect to eternal ſalvation. It appears likewiſe from hence, that Chriſtian maſters ought to conſider their ſervants as their brethren in *Chriſt Jeſus*, and to treat them with all mildneſs and humanity.

THE

THE

EPISTLE OF ST. PAUL.

TO THE

HEBREWS.

ARGUMENT.

There is reaſon to believe St. Paul *wrote this Epiſtle in the year of our Lord ſixty-one, being a priſoner at* Rome, *and addreſſed it to the* Hebrews, *that is to ſay, to the* Jews *that were converted to Chriſtianity. His deſign is, to confirm them in the profeſſion of the Goſpel, and in holineſs, and to prevent them from being drawn away by the fondneſs they might ſtill have for the* Jewiſh *religion and worſhip, or by the perſecutions which Chriſtians were expoſed to, and the allurements of ſin; for which purpoſe he ſhews, that* Chriſt *is greater than* Moſes, *that the Goſpel is more excellent than the law, and that the ceremonies and ſacrifices of the law had had their accompliſhment in* Jeſus Chriſt, *and were conſequently aboliſhed by his coming, and by his ſacrifice. This is the ſubject of the firſt ten chapters. In the three laſt, he exhorts the* Hebrews *to perſeverance in the faith, to patience under afflictions, and to the moſt important duties of religion.*

CHAP. I.

ST. *Paul* teaches in this chapter, that God had revealed himſelf to men by *Jeſus Chriſt*, in a more perfect manner than he had ever done before. He proves

proves the excellency of the Goſpel, by the infinite dignity of *Jeſus Chriſt*, the Son of God; ſhewing that he was exalted to ſupreme glory in heaven, and that he is more excellent than the angels; and he confirms the divinity of his perſon.

REFLECTIONS *after reading the chapter.*

I. The firſt truth which St. *Paul* teaches in this Epiſtle, is, that *Jeſus Chriſt* is not a mere man, or only a great prophet, or even an angel; but that he is infinitely above the prophets, and even the angels, being the only Son of God; that by him the world was made; that God has ſet him on his right hand; and that all the angels worſhip him as their Lord. Since St. *Paul* firſt ſettles this doctrine of our Lord's divinity, and from thence proves the excellence of the Chriſtian Religion, it evidently appears, that our whole religion is founded on this doctrine; and, therefore, that all Chriſtians ought to believe and embrace it. II. St. *Paul* tells us, that God has ſpoken to us in theſe laſt days by his Son; which engages us to praiſe God, that we have the advantage of living under the moſt perfect of all diſpenſations, and in the happy times of the Goſpel. III. Since God has revealed his will to us by his own Son, and manifeſted himſelf in a more perfect manner than he had done before, it was our indiſpenſable duty to improve the bleſſing of the covenant of grace, and to ſurpaſs in holineſs thoſe who lived before the coming of *Jeſus Chriſt*. Laſtly, The conſideration of our Lord's divinity, and of the ſupreme power to which he is exalted in heaven, ſhould lead us to worſhip him, to hope in him, and to obey the Goſpel we received from him, as St. *Paul* proves in the following chapter.

CHAP. II.

I ST. *Paul* exhorts the *Hebrews* to continue ſtedfaſt in the profeſſion of the Goſpel, which had been preached to them by *Jeſus Chriſt* and the apoſtles, and confirmed

confirmed by the gifts of the Holy Ghoſt. II. He ſhews for this purpoſe, that though *Jeſus* was man, and humbled himſelf even unto death, yet all things are made ſubject unto him; and that God has raiſed him to heavenly glory after his ſufferings. III. He ſhews, in the laſt place, that God was pleaſed that our Lord ſhould take our nature and ſuffer, that he might redeem men from the power of the devil, and of death, and that the faithful might learn from his example not to be afraid of afflictions.

REFLECTIONS.

ST. *Paul* teaches us here, I. That the Goſpel having been preached by *Jeſus Chriſt* and the apoſtles, and confirmed by the gifts of the Holy Ghoſt, we have undeniable proofs of the divinity of the Chriſtian doctrine; and that therefore we ſhould be altogether inexcuſable, and ſhall not eſcape the vengeance of God, if we neglect this great ſalvation that is offered to us, and if we do not openly profeſs the truth, and ſincerely obey the Goſpel. II. The conſideration of the glory and power wherewith *Chriſt* was inveſted after his humiliation and death, teaches us, that the ſufferings to which the faithful are expoſed, will not hinder them from attaining to glory; it being the will of God, to bring them to glory the ſame way that *Chriſt* himſelf arrived at it. III. We ought likewiſe to conſider, that the Son of God took upon him the nature of man, and was lower than the angels for a time, that through the goodneſs of God he might die for all men, make an atonement for their ſins, and deſtroy the empire of the devil, and of death. This is a doctrine which ſhould fill us with joy, and a firm confidence in God through *Chriſt*, and which likewiſe very ſtrongly engages us to live as his redeemed, and to flee from ſin, leſt we ſhould fall again under the power of the devil, and of death, from which our Lord came to deliver us.

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

THE apoſtle does two things in this chapter: I. He ſhews, that *Chriſt* was far above *Moſes* ſince *Moſes* was only a ſervant in the houſe of God; whereas *Chriſt*, as a Son, is the Lord and maſter of it. II. He exhorts the *Hebrews* to obey the Goſpel, and not to imitate the *Iſraelites*, who were excluded from the land of *Canaan*, and who died in the wilderneſs, becauſe of their rebellion and unbelief.

REFLECTIONS.

I. WHAT St. *Paul* ſays in this chapter, of the excellency of the perſon and miniſtry of *Chriſt* above the perſon and miniſtry of *Moſes*, ſhould make us ſenſible of the obligations which Chriſtians lie under of adhering to *Chriſt* by a ſincere obedience and true faith, as it proves the greatneſs of the crime which thoſe are guilty of who fall into diſobedience and unbelief. II. We are to conſider, that the ancient *Iſraelites*, for their rebellion and unbelief when *Moſes* cauſed them to hear the voice of God, died in the wilderneſs; and God ſwore that they ſhould not enter into the reſt which was prepared in the land of *Canaan* for the people of *Iſrael*. It is thus God reſolves to exclude from reſt in heaven thoſe whoſe hearts wander from the right way, and who provoke him by their rebellion and obduraterneſs. This is a powerful engagement to be attentive, and ſubmit to the Goſpel, and to improve the day of grace, as St. *Paul* ſpeaks in this ſerious exhortation; *To day if you will hear the voice of God, harden not your hearts: Take heed leſt there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God: but exhort one another daily, whilſt the time and day of grace laſts, leſt any of you be hardened through the deceitfulneſs of ſin.*

CHAP. IV.

I. ST. *Paul* continues to ſhew, that as the diſobedient *Iſraelites* did not enter into the land of *Canaan*, ſo neither ſhall the unbelieving Chriſtians enter into the kindiom of heaven. For this purpoſe he obſerves, that what *David* ſays in the Pſalms, of the people's entering into God's reſt, is not ſo much to be underſtood of the land of *Canaan*, as of the true reſt, which conſiſts in the enjoyment of the ſalvation that *Chriſt* has obtained for us. II. He concludes from thence, that we ought to labour to enter into this reſt: He declares, that unbelievers ſhall not eſcape thoſe threatenings which the word of God has denounced againſt them, ſince his word is true, and divine, and powerful. And laſtly, To encourage the *Hebrews* to perſevere in the Chriſtian profeſſion, and to be conſtant under afflictions, he repreſents that *Jeſus Chriſt* is a merciful High Prieſt, who is aſcended into heaven; and who having himſelf ſuffered, is inclined to have compaſſion upon our infirmities, and to aſſiſt us in all our wants.

REFLECTIONS.

WE learn from this chapter, I. That thoſe who deſpiſe and neglect the promiſes of God, ſhall be deprived of them; and that the word of God is of no uſe, when it is not attended with faith in thoſe that hear it; wherefore all thoſe to whom this word is preached, and theſe promiſes are made, ſhould be careful to receive them with obedience of faith. II. St. *Paul* teaches us, that there is a reſt which *Chriſt* has acquired for us, and which is much more excellent than that which was promiſed to the *Iſraelites* in the land of *Canaan*; and as the *Iſraelites* could not enter into the reſt of the land of *Canaan* becauſe of their infidelity and rebellion, ſo thoſe who do not obey *Jeſus Chriſt*, and who deſpiſe his Goſpel, will be deprived of everlaſting reſt. The conſequence St. *Paul* would

have us draw from hence, is to uſe our utmoſt endeavours to enter into that reſt, leſt we ſhould fall into the like rebellion. III. To engage us to this duty, the apoſtle repreſents to us, that the word of God is true, and powerful, and that the threatenings of the Goſpel are no leſs certain; that they will be infallibly executed, and that we ſhall not be able to eſcape from him with whom we have to do, ſince all things are naked and open in his ſight. Laſtly, Since we know that *Jeſus* our great High Prieſt, entered into heaven after he had been himſelf tempted in all things like unto us, ſin only excepted, and that he is alſo a gracious and merciful High Prieſt; we have the moſt powerful motives to hold faſt the profeſſion we make of believing in him, to truſt in his promiſes, and to *come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in the time of need.*

CHAP. V.

ST. *Paul*, treating of the prieſthood of *Jeſus Chriſt*, ſhews, I. That he was called by God to the office of a prieſt, which he proves by two prophecies, taken out of the Book of Pſalms, and particularly by that which foretels that the Meſſiah ſhould be a high-prieſt after the order of *Melchiſedec*. II. He ſays next, that *Chriſt* performed the functions of a prieſt, when he ſuffered death for the ſalvation of men. III. And laſtly, When he is going to ſpeak of the prieſthood of our Lord, and of the reſemblance there was between him and *Melchiſedec*, he reproaches the *Hebrews* with the ſmall progreſs they had made in the knowledge of the myſteries of religion, which he was going to explain to them.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THIS chapter teaches us, that *Chriſt* was appointed by God to be our high-prieſt, and that under this character he offered up himſelf a ſacrifice for the ſins of mankind. This engages us to look upon *Jeſus*

Chriſt as the author of our ſalvation, who has rendered God propitious and favourable to us; but this very doctrine ſhould likewiſe convince us of our obligation to ſubmit ourſelves to the Goſpel, by a ſincere obedience; ſince, as St. *Paul* ſays, *Chriſt became the author of eternal ſalvation to thoſe only that obey him.* II. The ſecond reflection relates to the ſufferings of *Chriſt*, which St. *Paul* deſcribes, ſaying, our Lord, *in the days of his fleſh, offered up prayers and ſupplications, with ſtrong crying and tears, unto him that was able to ſave him from death; and was heard, in that he feared, having learnt obedience by the things which he ſuffered.* St. *Paul* ſaid this, not only to ſhew that *Jeſus Chriſt* diſcharged on earth the office of a high-prieſt; but alſo to comfort Chriſtians in affliction and perſecution. The children of God may diſcover, from what happened to our Lord, that when they are expoſed to ſufferings, they are like their Saviour; that God ſends them afflictions, to teach them patience and obedience, and to call upon him with great zeal; and that God will hear them and deliver them, when they offer up their prayers to him in their neceſſities. III. We are to conſider that if the apoſtle reproached the *Hebrews* for being ſo little advanced in knowledge, that they ſtill needed to be taught the firſt principles of Chriſtianity, we ſhould be much more aſhamed to deſerve the like reproaches, conſidering the time that is employed in inſtructing us; wherefore we ought to exert ourſelves in acquiring new light, and in daily making greater progreſs in the knowledge of religion.

CHAP. VI.

ST. *Paul* tells the *Hebrews*, that it was not his intention to teach them the firſt rudiments of religion, but that he deſigned to propoſe to them more ſublime doctrines, diſcourſing of the ſimilitude which there was between *Chriſt* and *Melchiſedec*, and the ancient prieſts. II. To excite them to make a progreſs in the knowledge of the myſteries of the Goſpel, he ſets before

before them the unhappineſs of thoſe who neglecting to confirm themſelves in the faith, and deſpiſing the knowledge and graces they have received from God, do not produce the fruits which God expects from them, and at laſt renounce the truth and forſake *Chriſt*. III. He tells the *Hebrews*, that the reaſon why he ſpake to them in this manner, was to awaken their zeal, ſince he was convinced that they would not expoſe themſelves to the like misfortunes. IV. And laſtly, To ſtrengthen their faith, he repreſents to them the ſteadineſs of God's promiſes, by the example of *Abraham*, and the certainty of that hope which *Chriſt*'s entrance into heaven gives all believers.

REFLECTIONS.

I. WE ought to take great notice of the firſt verſes of this chapter, in which St. *Paul* ſhews us what are the fundamental articles of religion, *viz.* The doctrine of faith in God; of repentance and forſaking ſin; of baptiſm; of the reſurrection of the dead; and of the laſt judgment. Wherefore theſe are the doctrines which we ſhould all firmly believe, and which are neceſſary to ſalvation. II. The apoſtle teaches us, that it is not enough to know theſe doctrines, but that Chriſtians ought to aim at greater perfection, and to join to the knowledge of theſe eſſential truths, that of other truths, which ſerve to give light to religion, and to confirm the faith. St. *Paul* even intimates, that when we neglect to improve in knowledge, we are in great danger of loſing all reliſh for the truths of religion, to renounce the faith, and fall into infidelity. III. He declares in this chapter, that thoſe who have been once enlightened, and have taſted the good word of God, and the heavenly gift; if they renounce the truth and godlineſs, cannot repent, at leaſt without extreme difficulty, and if they perſevere in that ſtate muſt periſh. This ſhould make us extremely afraid to ſin againſt light, to deſpiſe the word of God, and to reſiſt the workings of his grace, leſt

leſt we ſhould bring upon ourſelves the curſe which St. *Paul* denounces againſt thoſe who abuſe the grace of God; which he repreſents by a piece of ground that is duly cultivated, and watered with frequent rains, and bears nothing but thorns and briars, and is therefore curſed, and appointed to be burned. IV. And laſtly, Thoſe who believe the Goſpel, and manifeſt the ſincerity of their faith by their patience and charity, may for their comfort and encouragement conſider what the apoſtle ſays here, that *God is not unrighteous, to forget their work and labour of love*; that his promiſes are unchangeable, having been made with an oath, and confirmed by *Chriſt*'s exaltation into heaven, were he is entered as our forerunner. This is the hope of the faithful, which, as an anchor of the ſoul, ſure, and ſtedfaſt, penetrates even into heaven, and makes them unmoveable in the midſt of the trials and afflictions to which they are expoſed.

CHAP. VII.

IN this chapter St. *Paul* ſhews the excellency of the prieſthood of *Jeſus Chriſt*, by conſidering him as a prieſt after the order of *Melchiſedec*. For which end he obſerves, I. That *Melchiſedec* was a prieſt after a different manner from the *Jewiſh* prieſts. This appears, becauſe he was a king, and becauſe the ſcripture does not relate his genealogy, nor ſay any thing either of his predeceſſors, or of his ſucceſſors after his death; in which he was a type of *Jeſus Chriſt*, who is eternal, and our only high prieſt. The apoſtle adds, that *Melchiſedec* was ſuperior to *Abraham*, that patriarch having paid him tithes of the ſpoil. II. St. *Paul* obſerves farther, that *Chriſt* was not of the family of *Aaron*, out of which the *Jewiſh* prieſts were choſen, and that God had promiſed with an oath that the prieſthood according to *Melchiſedec* was to be everlaſting. From all theſe conſiderations St. *Paul* would infer, that the prieſthood of the Meſſiah was of a quite different nature from that of the *Jewiſh* prieſts;

prieſts; that he was to be both king and prieſt together, and the only prieſt; that his ſacrifice was to be only one, and that moſt perfect; and that, conſequently, the Levitical prieſthood was to be aboliſhed. III. The apoſtle ſhews, about the end of the chapter, that *Chriſt* infinitely excelled the *Jewiſh* prieſts by his perfect holineſs.

REFLECTIONS.

THE principal obſervation that we are to make upon this whole chapter, is to acknowledge and admire the infinite wiſdom of God, who had ſo clearly ſignified in the ancient prophecies what the Meſſiah was to be, as St. *Paul* ſhews, by proving ſo evidently out of the law itſelf, and from the Old Teſtament, that the Levitical worſhip and prieſthood were to be aboliſhed by the ſacrifice and oblation of our Lord *Jeſus Chriſt*. This ought powerfully to convince us of the truth of the Goſpel, and ſtir us up to ſearch into and meditate upon the Scriptures, and particularly the prophets, in which we find ſuch convincing proofs of the divinity of the Chriſtian doctrine. And ſince the deſign of this whole chapter is to inſtruct us in the perfection and efficacy of the ſacrifice of *Chriſt*, we cannot doubt but that we ſhall find in him all that is neceſſary to obtain the pardon of our ſins, and to purify our ſouls; and that having for our prieſt and our king one that is perfectly holy, and exalted above the heavens, he will be able to ſave to the utmoſt all thoſe that come to God by him.

CHAP. VIII.

THE apoſtle does two things. I. He goes on to ſhew, that *Chriſt* was ſuperior to the *Jewiſh* prieſts upon the following account: That having been exalted to heaven, he is the miniſter and high prieſt of the heavenly ſanctuary, whereas the ancient prieſts were no more than miniſters of the earthly ſanctuary. II. With the ſame view he ſhews, that God had foretold

foretold by the prophet *Jeremiah*, that the covenant which he formerly made with the *Iſraelites* ſhould be abolished, and that he would enter into a more excellent one with mankind, in which he would pardon their ſins, and ſanctify them by his ſpirit.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter engages us to make the three following reflections. I. That we have a great high prieſt in the heavens, ſet at the right hand of the Divine Majeſty. This entrance of *Chriſt* into heaven, is the greateſt proof of the perfection and efficacy of his ſacrifice, and ſhould likewiſe aſſure us, that he has procured all true believers a right to the heavenly glory, and that he will one day exalt them to it. II. The ſecond reflection relates to the happineſs we have of being admitted into the new covenant, which God had promiſed to make with men at the coming of the Meſſiah, for which we owe him our continual gratitude and thankfulneſs. III. In the third place, ſince the end which God propoſed to himſelf by this covenant was to put his laws in our heart, to fill us all with the knowledge and fear of him, and to forgive us our ſins; we ſhould remember that this covenant will be uſeleſs with reſpect to us, unleſs we on our part make ſuitable returns, and faithfully diſcharge thoſe duties which our covenant with him requires of us; this we learn from the example of the *Jews*, who did not keep the covenant of the Lord, and who for that reaſon, were rejected by him. Laſtly, Since God has promiſed to write his holy laws in our hearts, and in our minds, we ſhould beſeech him, according to his promiſes, to increaſe in us his knowledge more and more, and to imprint his fear and love in our hearts by the effectul working of his grace, ſo that we may always be his true people, and he may be always our God.

CHAP.

CHAP. IX.

I. ST. *Paul* gives us a deſcription of the ancient tabernacle, and of the ſervice performed therein: and he obſerves particularly, that the high prieſt entered but once a year into the moſt holy place; which was to ſhew, that the way to heaven was not yet revealed to all men. II. He informs us next, that the ſacrifices and other ceremonies of the *Jews*, were types and figures of what was to happen one day; and eſpecially, that the entrance of the high prieſt into the moſt holy place, ſignified, that *Chriſt* would enter into heaven by his own blood; and that by this means he would obtain for us an eternal redemption; his blood having a power to ſanctify men, which that of the legal victims wanted. III. The apoſtle adds, that as the ancient covenant was confirmed by the blood of the victims, ſo was the new, which is far more excellent, by the blood of *Chriſt*. IV. He concludes from all this, that the ſacrifice of *Chriſt* is perfect, and of an infinite value; that it muſt not be repeated; and that *Chriſt* being once dead, there is nothing more to be expected, but that he ſhould come at the laſt day to introduce the faithful into his glory.

REFLECTIONS.

THE compariſon St. *Paul* makes, between the prieſts of the law, and *Jeſus Chriſt*, tends chiefly to inſtruct us in the power and virtue of his death and ſacrifice. We ſee here, that the blood of *Chriſt* has a virtue with which the legal ſacrifices were not attended; foraſmuch as it opens to us the way to heaven, where our Lord is entered for us, as well as for himſelf; which gives us the moſt glorious and exalted hopes. But St. *Paul* teaches us likewiſe, that this blood muſt ſanctify and *purge our conſcience from dead works to ſerve the living God;* by which we ſee, that the ſacrifice of *Chriſt* lays us under a neceſſity of labouring

labouring for our ſanctification, and enables us ſo to do. To the ſame end, we muſt meditate upon what is ſaid in this chapter, that the covenant of the Goſpel was confirmed by the blood and death of the Son of God; by which that covenant is made firm and unchangeable in all that it contains; the duties it preſcribes are altogether inviolable and ſacred, and its threats, as well as its promiſes, will be infallibly executed. Laſtly, If the ſacrifice of *Chriſt* was only once offered, and can never be repeated; and if there remains nothing more, but his returning at the laſt day to ſave thoſe that wait for him, and who live in godlineſs; it follows from thence, that there is but one only means, and one only time to obtain ſalvation. The only means is, to lay hold on the grace which is offered us in *Chriſt Jeſus;* and the only time is, the time of this life; ſince *it is appointed unto men once to die, and after that the judgment.*

CHAP. X.

I. ST. *Paul* ſhews, that the ſacrifices of the law were not capable of atoning for the ſins of men, nor of ſanctifying them; and that nothing but the ſacrifice of *Jeſus Chriſt*, and the oblation he has once made of his body by the will of God, could produce this effect. II. Having thus proved the imperfection of the *Jewiſh* ſacrifices, and the perfection of the ſacrifices of our Lord *Jeſus*, he exhorts the *Hebrews* to draw near to God with confidence, and to perſevere in the profeſſion of the Chriſtian Religion, and in the practice of good works. III. He threatens with the moſt terrible puniſhments thoſe who after having received the knowledge of the Goſpel, fall into diſobedience and apoſtaſy. IV. And for fear perſecution ſhould ſtagger the faith of Chriſtians, and make them call in queſtion the promiſes of God, he exhorts them to ſuffer with the ſame confidence as they had done till then, and to wait with patience, and with ſtedfaſt faith, the fulfilling of his promiſes.

REFLEC-

REFLECTIONS.

THE firſt part of this chapter inſtructs us in the perfection of the ſacrifice of *Chriſt*, and of its effects. St. *Paul* teaches us, that our ſins were expiated by the oblation *Chriſt* made of his body upon the croſs; and that after having offered himſelf as a ſacrifice for the ſins of mankind, he is ſet down for ever on the right hand of God. Beſides this, the apoſtle makes us conſider the ſacrifice of our Lord as an effect of his ſubmiſſion to the will of his Father, and of his love towards us. Theſe are conſiderations which ſhould convince us, that the work of our redemption is fully accompliſhed, which ſhould inſpire us with an ardent love for this gracious Saviour, and engage us likewiſe to ſubmit in all things to the will of God. The ſecond part of this chapter furniſhes us with theſe four inſtructions: I. That ſince *Chriſt* has obtained for us, by his death and aſcenſion, an entrance into heaven, we may draw near to God with full aſſurance, if we do it with a heart purified and cleanſed from the defilements of ſin. II. That we ought to perſevere in the open profeſſion of the faith, and excite one another continually to piety, charity, and all good works. III. That although the Goſpel be a covenant of grace, yet it threatens with the moſt dreadful puniſhments thoſe that ſhall break it; that the puniſhments which the Goſpel denounces againſt thoſe that ſhall deſpiſe the blood of the Son of God, and affront his Holy Spirit, are infinitely more terrible, than what was inflicted on thoſe who violated the law of *Moſes*; that there remains no more ſacrifice for rebellious and apoſtate Chriſtians; that they have nothing to expect but a tremendous judgment; and that it is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. IV. This portion of Scripture teaches us, that Chriſtians ought never to faint under perſecutions; that they ought even to ſuffer with joy the loſs of their goods, and the moſt grievous afflictions,

afflictions, ſince they will afterwards infallibly meet with a great reward from God; and that when they have done his will, they ſhall receive the fruit of his promiſes.

CHAP. XI.

THE apoſtle, to confirm the faith of the *Hebrews* in time of perſecution, propoſes to them the example of the patriarchs, and of the faithful of old, who, by their faith and truſt in the promiſes of God, had been acceptable to him, and had overcome the ſevereſt trials. Upon this account he ſpeaks of the nature of faith, and its ſurpriſing effects, and alledges the examples of *Abel*, *Enoch*, *Noah*, *Abraham*, and *Sarah*; to which he adds that of *Iſaac*, *Jacob*, and *Joſeph*, who, by the bleſſings which they gave their children and by what they ſaid before their death, ſhewed that they were convinced that the promiſes of God ſhould be fulfilled. He ſpeaks of *Moſes*, of the delivering the children of *Iſrael* out of *Egypt*, and their ſubduing the land of *Canaan*; and laſtly, of the judges, of *Samuel*, of *David*, and of divers prophets and martyrs, who by their faith had done great miracles, and had endured with conſtancy all kind of torments, and even death itſelf.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THIS chapter inſtructs us in the nature of faith, and its effects. St. *Paul* teaches us here, that faith is a ſtrong and lively perſuaſion of the truth of God's promiſes, and makes us conſider them as preſent, though we do not yet ſee them; that it conſiſts in believing that there is a God, the rewarder of thoſe that ſerve him: and that we cannot be acceptable to him without faith. II. The apoſtle ſets before us the wonderful effects of faith, in the examples of *Abel*, *Enoch*, *Noah*, the patriarchs and prophets, and other illuſtrious ſaints before *Chriſt*. From all theſe examples

examples we may obſerve in general, I. That in all ages from the beginning of the world, there have been holy men, who have believed in God, hoped in his promiſes, and have ſhewn the ſincerity of their faith, by obeying God under the greateſt difficulties. II. That faith has always been neceſſary, and no one was ever acceptable to God but by faith. III. That true faith has always produced theſe three effects, *viz.* Truſt in God's promiſes, obedience to his commands, and conſtancy in afflictions. This we have an example of in the patriarch *Abraham*, who gave ſuch extraordinary proofs of his faith, in leaving his own country, and offering up his ſon *Iſaac*, and living as his ſons did, a ſtranger and pilgrim upon earth, expecting a better life, and ſeeking a heavenly country. The ſame is very remarkable likewiſe in the conduct of *Moſes*, who choſe rather to ſuffer with the people of God, than to enjoy the advantages that were offered him in *Egypt*; as well as in the ſurpriſing conſtancy of the ancient martyrs under perſecution, and the moſt cruel tortures. All theſe examples ſhould enliven our faith in an extraordinary manner; inſpire us with courage and zeal, and engage us to obey God in all things, and even to ſuffer every thing for his ſake. And if we conſider, as St. *Paul* obſerves at the end of this chapter, that we have many advantages, which thoſe who lived before the coming of *Chriſt* did not enjoy, we ſhall find ourſelves under a much ſtricter obligation to walk in the footſteps of thoſe holy and illuſtrious ſervants of God, that by imitating their faith, we may, like them, arrive at perfection and ſalvation.

CHAP. XII.

I. ST. *Paul* exhorts the *Hebrews* to imitate the examples of the faithful under the Old Teſtament, which he had ſet before them in the preceding chapter; but above all the example of *Chriſt*; and to ſuffer afflictions with patience. II. He further obſerves

obſerves to them, that afflictions are the ſigns and effects of God's love, and that great advantage reſults from them to true believers; and encourages them by theſe conſiderations, to ſuffer perſecution with patience. III. He exhorts them to holineſs and perſeverance in the faith; and adviſes them to ſhun every thing that might occaſion their falling away from the grace of God, and not to ſuffer themſelves to be ſeduced by ſenſuality. IV. He compares the manner in which the law was given on *Mount Sinai* with the manner of publiſhing the Goſpel; by which compariſon he deſigns to ſhew how ſevere their puniſhment will be, who deſpiſe the voice of *Chriſt*, and violate the covenant of grace.

REFLECTIONS.

WE learn from hence, I. That the examples of the ſaints and true believers, who formerly rendered themſelves acceptable to God by their faith, patience, and obedience, has a great tendency to incite us to the ſame duties; eſpecially ſince God has vouchſafed us greater light, and more grace than to them; and, above all, as we have before our eyes the example of *Chriſt*, the author and finiſher of our faith. II. The apoſtle inſtructs us concerning the nature of afflictions; and though what he ſays relates properly to perſecution for the ſake of the Goſpel, it may be applied to afflictions in general; ſince it is always true, that God chaſtens us in love, to render us partakers of his holineſs; and that afflictions produce very happy effects in thoſe who receive them as they ought. This doctrine engages us in the two following duties: The one is neither to faint, nor to murmur in affliction; but to ſuffer it patiently, and even with joy, of what kind ſoever it be; ſince it is God our Father that ſends, and he only does it for our good: The other duty is, to anſwer the ends which God propoſes to himſelf by afflicting us, to make a right uſe of the evils they undergo, and to make

them

them inſtruments of our amendment and advancement in holineſs. III. We learn in this chapter our indiſpenſible obligation to ſtudy to live in peace and holineſs, without which we cannot ſee the Lord. IV. The apoſtle adviſes us to labour with great diligence to preſerve ourſelves in the favour of God, and to take care that there be in us no ſeed of unbelief and rebellion that may deprive us of it! And he proves, by the example of *Eſau*, that it is of the greateſt importance to avoid ſenſuality, and not to prefer the vain and frivolous advantages of the world, before that everlaſting happineſs which God offers us, leſt we be deprived of the bleſſing of our heavenly Father. Laſtly, The compariſon which the apoſtle here makes between the law and the Goſpel, offers us theſe two reflections: The firſt is, that we live under a covenant much more excellent than that of the *Jews*, and therefore are ſtrictly obliged to keep and obey it. For this reaſon St. *Paul* reminds us, that we are members of the Chriſtian church, that the Goſpel has been preached to us by the Son of God himſelf, and confirmed by his own blood; and that God, calls us to the poſſeſſion of an infinite glory in heaven with all the ſaints and angels. The ſecond reflection is, that though the Goſpel was not publiſhed with ſuch awful ſolemnity as the law was formerly upon mount *Sinai*; and though we live under a diſpenſation of grace and mercy; thoſe who ſhall deſpiſe the voice of *Chriſt* have reaſon to fear puniſhments much more ſevere than thoſe denounced againſt the *Jews*. This is what St. *Paul* expreſſes in theſe words: *If they eſcaped not who refuſed him that ſpake on earth, much more ſhall not we eſcape, if we turn away from him that ſpeaketh from heaven. Wherefore, we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, that we may ſerve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear; for our God is a conſuming fire.*

CHAP.

CHAP. XIII.

I. IN this laſt chapter, the apoſtle exhorts the *Hebrews* to charity, chaſtity, content of mind, and truſt in God. II. He recommends to them to remember their ſpiritual guides, and not to be drawn away from the pure doctrine which he had taught them, either by thoſe who wanted to retain the ſacrifices and ceremonies of the *Moſaical* law, or by fear of perſecution. III. He preſcribes to them the true Chriſtian ſacrifice of praiſe and beneficence, and charges them to ſubmit to their paſtors. IV. And laſtly, He recommends himſelf to their prayers, and prays for their ſanctification.

REFLECTIONS.

THE duties preſcribed in this chapter are the following: I. To love one another as brethren; to exerciſe charity and hoſpitality; and to take care of thoſe that ſuffer perſecution for the Goſpel. II. To live in chaſtity, whether in a ſingle or married ſtate; to abhor all kind of uncleanneſs, remembering that God will one day judge the impure. III. To flee covetouſneſs, to be content with our condition, and always to rely upon the providence of God. IV. To look upon the things of the world, and what flatters the deſires of the fleſh, as St. *Paul* would have Chriſtians look upon the ceremonies of the law; and to remember that the character of Chriſtians, and faith in *Chriſt* crucified, call us to take up our croſs, and to live in this world as thoſe who *have no continuing city here, but ſeek one to come.* V. Never to neglect the duty of praiſe and thankſgivings, nor that of charity and alms; both of them being moſt pleaſing ſacrifices to God. VI. St. *Paul*, as uſual, charges Chriſtians to remember their paſtors, to obey them, and ſubmit to them, as thoſe who watch for their ſouls, and to pray continually for them. Laſtly,

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He concludes theſe exhortations, and this Epiſtle, with this prayer in behalf of the *Hebrews*, and which we ought to make for ourſelves, and for one another: *May the God of peace make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleaſing in his ſight, through Jeſus Chriſt; to whom be glory for ever and ever.* Amen.

The End of the Epiſtle of St. PAUL *to the* HEBREWS.

THE

GENERAL EPISTLE

OF

ST. JAMES.

ARGUMENT.

This Epiſtle and the following are called Catholic, that is to ſay, univerſal, or general, becauſe they were wrote to Chriſtians in general, and not to ſome particular perſons or churches. This of St. James, *is directed to the* Jews *of the twelve tribes, who had been long diſperſed in divers countries, and had embraced the Chriſtian religion. The deſign of it is, to ſtrengthen them againſt perſecutions, and chiefly againſt certain falſe teachers, and hypocrites, who profeſſing themſelves Chriſtians, and boaſting that they knew more than others, lived in ſin and licentiouſneſs. What time this Epiſtle was written is not certain.*

CHAP. I.

I. THE apoſtle here exhorts the believers to rejoice in afflictions, and to ſeek by prayer for that aſſiſtance which they ſtood in need of to ſupport them. II. He comforts thoſe Chriſtians who were perſecuted or deſpiſed by the world, and he exhorts the rich to be humble. III. He ſpeaks againſt thoſe, who,

who, yielding to perſecution and other temptations, threw the fault on God, and maintained that he inclined men to ſin; and ſhews, that God being perfectly holy, can incline men to nothing but good. IV. He condemns thoſe who contented themſelves with hearing the word of God, without obſerving its directions; and thoſe proud teachers, who preſumed on themſelves, and ſpoke evil of others: he ſhews that the religion of ſuch perſons is vain; and teaches that true religion conſiſts in the practice of works of charity, and in renouncing the world.

REFLECTIONS *after reading the chapter.*

THIS chapter contains ſeveral uſeful inſtructions: I. The firſt is, that afflictions, and particularly thoſe which we ſuffer for the Goſpel, ought to be an occaſion of joy to all Chriſtians, ſince they ſerve to try them, to render them perfect, and to make them obtain the crown of life, which God has promiſed to thoſe that love him. II. That God never refuſes his grace and ſpiritual gifts to ſuch as aſk them of him with faith, and therefore it is our own fault if we are not endowed with them. III. That thoſe true believers, who are but in a mean ſtation in this world, ſhould glory in the Lord; and, on the contrary, that the rich and great ought to entertain ſentiments of humility. IV. The fourth inſtruction, well worth our obſervation, is, that God is by no means the author of ſin and temptation, but that ſin does only proceed from ourſelves; and that God is ſo far from being the cauſe of ſin, that he is the author of all good, ſince he has regenerated us by his word, that we may become new creatures. V. St. *James* teaches us, that it is not ſufficient to hear the word of God, but that our great and principal buſineſs is, to practiſe what it commands; to attend to it with a peaceable, meek, and teachable diſpoſition; and with a heart free from diſorderly paſſions. VI. And laſtly, We may learn from hence, that thoſe who think themſelves holy,

and better than other men, and yet do not govern their tongue, are falſely religious; and that ſolid piety and true religion do chiefly conſiſt in exerciſing charity towards the unhappy, and in preſerving ourſelves pure, ſo as not to be defiled by the corruptions of the world.

CHAP. II.

THIS chapter conſiſts of two parts: I. St. *James* reproves thoſe who had regard to rich men, and deſpiſed the poor in the aſſemblies of the church. He ſhews, that faith in *Chriſt Jeſus* did not allow of ſuch diſtinction, ſince God has choſen the poor, as well as the rich, to give them the kingdom of heaven; and that the evangelical law, by which we are to be judged, is the law of charity and liberty. II. In the ſecond part, St. *James* confutes thoſe who maintained that we can be juſtified by faith in *Chriſt*, without good works; and he ſhews, by the very nature of faith, and by the examples of *Abraham* and *Rahab*, that the faith which is not attended with good works is vain, and cannot ſave us.

REFLECTIONS.

IN the firſt part of this chapter we are taught, I. That Chriſtians ought to prove by their behaviour, that they look upon one another as brethren, eſpecially in their religious aſſemblies; and, in general, that no one ſhould eſteem the rich, becauſe of his riches, nor deſpiſe the poor becauſe of their poverty, ſince faith and piety may be found in the poor and mean, as well as in the rich and great; and ſince God has likewiſe choſen the poor, who are rich in faith, to make them heirs of his kingdom. This too ſhould teach the rich not to entertain ſentiments of pride, nor deſpiſe or oppreſs the poor. II. St. *James* teaches us, that the law of *Chriſt* is a law of charity, humility, and true liberty, and that God will judge us by that law. III. That he who breaks the law of God in one

one commandment, is as guilty in his ſight, as if he had broken all the commandments; becauſe all the commandments of this law proceed from God, and therefore we cannot wilfully tranſgreſs any one of them, without deſpiſing the majeſty and authority of the Lawgiver; which proves, that true piety conſiſts in the practice of our whole duty, and that the abandoning ourſelves to one ſin only, and the continuing in one evil habit, is ſufficient to exclude us from ſalvation. In the next place, it greatly concerns us to obſerve what St. *James* teaches concerning juſtification, in the ſecond part of this chapter, and with what ſtrength of argument he diſproves the impious doctrine of thoſe, who held that we are juſtified by faith without good works. The apoſtle ſhews, that true faith is neceſſarily attended with good works, and that the faith which does not produce good works is vain and dead; this he confirms by the example of *Abraham*, who manifeſted the ſincerity of his faith by his obedience to God, in offering his ſon *Iſaac*; as alſo, by the example of *Rahab*, who, by receiving the ſpies ſent by *Joſhua* to *Jericho*, ſhewed that ſhe was firmly perſuaded God would give the land of *Canaan* to the children of *Iſrael*. From hence we may gather, that thoſe who neglect good works, and do not prove their faith by a holy life, and by obedience to God's commands, are without true faith, and can by no means be juſtified, nor partake of ſalvation.

CHAP. III.

I. ST. *James* forbids Chriſtians to ſet up themſelves for teachers, and maſters over others, or to condemn or ſpeak evil of other perſons; and he repreſents what miſchiefs and diſorders the tongue may produce. II. He obſerves next, that meekneſs, forbearance, and love of peace, are the tokens by which true Chriſtians are to be diſtinguiſhed; and that herein lies the difference between true and falſe wiſdom.

dom. We muſt obſerve that what St. *James* ſays here, relates to certain perſons, who thought themſelves more knowing and more perfect than others, who condemned with great pride and ſeverity thoſe that were not of their opinion, and thereby diſturbed the peace of the church.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THIS chapter treats firſt of the ſins into which we may fall by the tongue, which we ought moſt ſeriouſly to obſerve. St. *James* teaches us here, that the tongue may be the occaſion of numberleſs evils; that by our diſcourſe we may ſin many ways againſt God, and againſt our neighbour; and by it the edification of the church may be deſtroyed, and the fire of diviſion and diſcord kindled. This obliges us to regulate our words by the fear of God; to ſpeak little; to avoid above all ſlander and calumny; and to abſtain from every thing in diſcourſe, that is contrary to charity and humility. That this duty is of the greateſt importance, St. *James* teaches us, when he remarks, that one of the ſureſt tokens of true piety, is to know how to govern the tongue. The apoſtle, in this chapter, gives us another mark whereby to know thoſe who are endowed with ſolid piety and true wiſdom; namely, meekneſs and great moderation in their diſcourſe and all their behaviour. He declares, in the ſtrongeſt terms, that thoſe who think themſelves more knowing and more pious than others, but are indiſcreet and inſolent in their words, ill-natured, and full of envy and pride, and that ſpeak evil of others, and occaſion diviſions, are only hypocrites; he ſays, that wherever malice and ſlander prevail, there is all kind of evil, and no good to be expected. Laſtly, He teaches us, that the true piety, which proceeds from heaven, is pure, peaceable, moderate, full of mercy and good fruits, ſincere, and without hypocriſy. All therefore who deſire to be truly wiſe,

ſhould

ſhould ſtudy to acquire this divine wiſdom, the foundation of which is charity, and to put on this ſpirit of meekneſs, moderation, ſincerity, and peace. Thus will they experience, both in this world and the other, what St. *James* ſays in the laſt words of this chapter: *That the fruit of righteouſneſs is ſown in peace for them that make peace.*

CHAP. IV.

I. ST. *James* having mentioned the evils which the tongue and a ſpirit of ſtrife and diſſention do produce, ſhews in this chapter, that all theſe diſorders proceed from carnal paſſions, and particularly from the love of pleaſures, from pride, from a deſire of pre-eminence above others, from the love of the world, and from a ſpirit of envy and jealouſy. II. He exhorts thoſe in whom theſe paſſions reign, to humble themſelves, and draw near to God by repentance; and he particularly forbids ſlandering and raſh judgments. III. And laſtly, He condemns thoſe who form projects and deſigns, without reflecting upon the vanity of life, and without conſidering that they depend upon the providence of God.

REFLECTIONS.

WE learn here, I. That the love of pleaſure, and our other paſſions, are the principal cauſe of thoſe evils which men do to one another, and of the diviſions that prevail in the church. Wherefore we ought to wean our hearts from theſe paſſions, and particularly from the love of the world, which is the ſource of all irregular deſires, and from pride; remembering that the Scripture ſays not in vain, that *whoſoever will be a friend of the world, is the enemy of God;* and that *God reſiſteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.* II. We ſee, in this chapter, that when our paſſions, and the love of the world, have led us aſtray from God, we muſt draw near to him again by repentance;

ance; we muſt be ſenſible of our miſery, bewail our faults, reſiſt temptations, renounce the things of this world, and purify our hearts and all our actions; and then he will draw near to us. III. The apoſtle teaches us, that calumny is a great ſin, ſince he who ſpeaks evil of his brother, who judges and condemns him, takes upon him to do that which belongs to none but God. IV. St. *James* adviſes us to remember in all our deſigns, and particularly in thoſe in which we have intereſt and advantage in view, that our life is ſhort and uncertain, and that it vaniſhes away like ſmoke; that it is, therefore, a great folly to form remote projects, preſuming upon the duration of our own lives, and upon our own induſtry; and that we ought to depend upon the providence of God in all things. V. We learn from hence, that it is not ſufficient for us to know our duty, but that we ought to make a right uſe of our knowledge, and the opportunities we have of doing good; without which our knowledge will only make us more guilty before God. This is the important advice contained in theſe words: *He that knoweth good, and doth it not, to him it is ſin.*

CHAP. V.

1. THE apoſtle having ſpoken, in the foregoing chapter, of thoſe who labour to heap up riches, without conſidering that they depend upon Providence, denounces the judgments of God againſt the rich and covetous, againſt thoſe that live in voluptuouſneſs, and oppreſs the poor. II. He afterwards applies himſelf to Chriſtians in affliction; He exhorts them to wait with patience for the coming of the Lord; not to complain too bitterly againſt thoſe that did them evil; and to avoid every thing that denoted impatience, and particularly ſwearing. III. He ſhews laſtly, the duty of thoſe that are in affliction; orders thoſe that are ſick to ſend for the paſtors of the church, and

promiſes

promiſes that they ſhall be healed, after the paſtors had prayed for them, and anointed them with oil. This anointing was a ceremony practiſed in thoſe times, by the means of which God wrought miraculous cures. St. *James* ſpeaks likewiſe of the confeſſion of ſin, of the efficacy of prayer, and of the fruits of brotherly reproof.

REFLECTIONS.

WHAT has been ſaid in this chapter ought to be a warning, I. To the rich; ſince St. *James* threatens with the curſe of God all thoſe rich men that are covetous, unjuſt, or make uſe of their wealth to live in pomp and luxury; thoſe to whom God has given wealth, ought carefully to avoid covetouſneſs, injuſtice, and voluptuouſneſs; and to conſider the vanity of riches, the temptations to which they expoſe men, and the terrible misfortunes into which all thoſe fall who ſet their heart upon them, or make a bad uſe of them. II. The apoſtle exhorts good men in affliction, and ſuch was the condition of moſt good men at that time, to ſuffer without complaining and murmuring, or fretting againſt any one, and to wait with patience till the Lord ſhall pleaſe to deliver them; and he informs them, that to learn patience, it will be of great uſe to meditate continually upon the ſufferings of the ſaints, and the happy iſſue of all their afflictions. III. This chapter teaches us, that all vain and raſh oaths, of what kind ſoever, are abſolutely forbid Chriſtians, as well as all haſty and angry expreſſions. IV. That thoſe who are afflicted, ought to ſeek for comfort in prayer; that ſick perſons ſhould call for their paſtors to pray with them; and that the confeſſion of ſins and prayer, when performed with zeal, faith, and in a ſpirit of love, are of great weight in the ſight of God. We may learn from the laſt words of this Epiſtle, that to reprove and admoniſh thoſe who live in ſin and error, is of very great advantage, not only to thoſe who

who are admoniſhed, but likewiſe to thoſe who admoniſh them, ſince thereby we deliver a ſoul from death, and even obtain from God the forgiveneſs of our own ſins.

The End of the GENERAL EPISTLE *of St.* JAMES.

THE

FIRST EPISTLE GENERAL

OF

ST. PETER.

ARGUMENT.

St. Peter *wrote this Epiſtle to the Chriſtians dwelling in the provinces of* Aſia Minor, *who were moſt of them diſperſed* Jews; *and it tends to confirm them in faith and holineſs. It contains ſeveral very weighty inſtructions, and is one of the fineſt Books in the New Teſtament.*

CHAP. I.

I. ST. *Peter* praiſes God for having called Chriſtians to ſalvation by *Chriſt Jeſus;* for ſupporting them by this hope, and even filling them with joy in the midſt of afflictions and perſecutions. II. He ſhews how happy they were to know *Chriſt*, and to be witneſſes of the accompliſhment of the prophecies in the Goſpel. III. He exhorts them, by divers motives, to holineſs, and to a life worthy of their Chriſtian calling.

REFLECTIONS *after reading the chapter.*

IN this chapter we are engaged to three principal duties. I. To render fervent and continual thanks to God for chooſing us to ſalvation, and for giving us, by the reſurrection of *Jeſus Chriſt*, a firm and glorious hope of immortality. II. To conſider ſeriouſly our happineſs in knowing theſe myſteries, which were the expectation of the prophets, and the ſubject of their prophecies, and which are ſtill the meditation and admiration of angels; God having afforded us in the Goſpel, the accompliſhment of thoſe promiſes which the prophets had made concerning the coming of the Meſſiah, and the redemption of mankind. III. The third duty is to remember, that all theſe glorious advantages oblige us to lead a pure and holy life. To perſuade us to this, St. *Peter* repreſents, 1. That God has delivered us from the ignorance and corruption in which men were involved when they knew not *Chriſt*. 2. That as God who has called us his holy, we ought likewiſe to be holy in our whole behaviour. 3. That the God whom we invoke as a father, is likewiſe our judge, and will render to all of us according to our works. 4. That we have been redeemed and conſecrated to God by the precious blood of *Chriſt*. And, laſtly, That we have received a new birth by the preaching of the Goſpel, which is the word of the living God, and remains for ever. Theſe are powerful inducements to a holy and Chriſtian life; let us have them continually before our eyes, and let us beſeech God to render them efficacious in our hearts, by the power of the Holy Spirit. *Amen.*

CHAP. II.

I. ST. *Peter* exhorts Chriſtians to live in innocence, to grow in the knowledge and grace of *Jeſus Chriſt*, to cleave to him more and more by faith, and the imitation of his life; that ſo being united to him, and to each other by love, they may together compoſe one

one church, a temple devoted to the Lord: to engage them to which, he ſets before them, on one hand, the unhappineſs of unbelievers who rejected *Chriſt*; and, on the other, the favour God had done them, in chooſing them to be his people, conſecrated to his ſervice and to his glory. II. He exhorts them next, to renounce the deſires of the fleſh, and to edify the Gentiles by their good behaviour; to ſubmit themſelves to kings and magiſtrates, and to love and honour all men. He recommends to Chriſtian ſlaves, who ſerved heathen maſters, to be in ſubjection to them, and to bear with patience whatever was uneaſy and diſagreeable in their condition; upon which occaſion, he ſpeaks of the obligation Chriſtians were under to imitate the patience of *Jeſus Chriſt*.

REFLECTIONS.

WE remark in this chapter. I. That the character of the true children of God, is innocence, meekneſs, ſimplicity, ſincerity, a real averſion to wickedneſs and hypocriſy, and a continual deſire of advancing in the grace of our Lord *Jeſus Chriſt*. II. We have here a beautiful deſcription of the calling of the Gentiles. St. *Peter* ſays, that the faithful are ſo many living ſtones, which compoſe a holy temple, in which there are offered ſpiritual ſacrifices, acceptable to God through *Jeſus Chriſt*; and that the church is an aſſembly of kings and prieſts, and choſen people, a people which God has purchaſed to himſelf. This engages us to conſider well the glorious condition to which God has exalted us, and to acknowledge the great goodneſs of God in chooſing us for his people, who were formerly miſerable heathens. And thoſe noble titles given us by the apoſtle, ſhould inſpire us with ſentiments worthy of ſo holy a calling, and of perſons conſecrated to the ſervice and glory of God. The duties which our holy and heavenly calling requires of us, are as St. *Peter* has deſcribed them with ſo much beauty and energy, to ſhew forth the power of his grace, who has called

called us from darkneſs to his marvellous light; to *abſtain from fleſhy luſts, that war againſt the ſoul;* remembering that we are *ſtrangers and pilgrims here upon earth;* to edify all men by a prudent and innocent behaviour; to fear God, reverence and ſubmit ourſelves to all our ſuperiors, and to render to all their due. Laſtly, It is one of the greateſt duties of Chriſtians to ſuffer patiently all the evils that may be brought upon them, and to ſet before them the example of our Redeemer, who, though he was guilty of no ſin, did notwithſtanding ſuffer with ſuch wonderful patience; leaving us an example, that we ſhould follow his ſteps.

CHAP. III.

I. ST. *Peter* goes on with the duties of Chriſtianity, and preſcribes, I. The duties of wives and huſbands. II. He exhorts all Chriſtians to love one another, and to live in peace and innocency; aſſuring them that this is the way to be happy, even in this life, and in the midſt of perſecutions. III. To engage Chriſtians to ſuffer perſecutions patiently, and to make an open profeſſion of the Goſpel, he tells them what *Chriſt* had ſuffered to atone for the ſins of mankind, and to bring to God the Gentiles, and people who were in bondage to ſin and ignorance; that entering into the church by baptiſm, and becoming new creatures, they might be ſaved, as *Noah* and his family had been formerly in the ark, at the time of the flood.

REFLECTIONS.

I. St. *Peter* exhorts Chriſtian women to be ſubject to their huſbands, to behave with great meekneſs, to avoid luxury and immodeſty in their apparel, and to be inwardly adorned with a pure, gentle, and peaceable ſpirit, which is of great value in the ſight of God. Upon this he takes occaſion to repreſent to the women who had huſbands that were heathens, that by purity and innocence of manners, and by a modeſt and reſpectful

ſpectful behaviour, they might incline them to think favourably of religion, and even convert them to Chriſtianity. Women who have the misfortune to be yoked with moroſe, ill-natured huſbands, may learn from hence, how much piety and weakneſs may help to render their condition more ſupportable. II. He exhorts huſbands to love their wives, to behave with prudence and kindneſs towards them, that their prayers be not hindered by their want of union. III. All Chriſtians in general are here excited to mutual and unfeigned love, are taught to injure no one, not to revenge themſelves, but to live in peace with all the world: St. *Peter* telling them, with *David*, that this is the way to make life much more agreeable, to pacify our enemies, and to be happy even when we are perſecuted. IV. We ſee in this chapter, that one of the principal duties of a Chriſtian is, to make a ſincere profeſſion of Chriſtianity, to keep a good conſcience, and to be always ready to give an account of our faith with meekneſs and reſpect, upon all occaſions that offer themſelves. V. Towards the end of this chapter St. *Peter* teaches us, that *Chriſt* ſuffered and roſe again, and cauſed the Goſpel to be preached to the Gentiles, to redeem men from the ſlavery of ſin; and that as *Noah* was formerly ſaved in the ark, we are likewiſe ſaved by baptiſm, which procures us admittance into the church of God; whence it follows, that we cannot attain to ſalvation but by faith in *Chriſt;* that it is neceſſary to make a publick profeſſion of that faith in baptiſm; but that baptiſm is not ſufficient to ſave us, if it be not accompanied with a pure conſcience. And laſtly, That thoſe who obey not the Goſpel ſhall periſh in their unbelief, like the inhabitants of the old world, who did not improve by the patience and forbearance of God, nor hearken to the preaching of *Noah;* for which reaſon they periſhed in the waters of the flood.

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

ST. *Peter* teaches in this chapter, I. That the ſufferings of *Jeſus Chriſt* obliged Chriſtians to renounce the errors in which they lived before their converſion to the Chriſtian Religion; and particularly, the impure and diſſolute life of the Gentiles; and to live in ſobriety and godlineſs, waiting for the coming of our Lord. II. That Chriſtians ought above all things to love and aſſiſt one another; and each one to employ to the glory of God, the different gifts he has received from him. III. That far from being ſurpriſed and diſcouraged at the ſufferings they underwent for the Goſpel, they ſhould account them very honourable; and further, that if the faithful themſelves are expoſed to ſo many ſufferings, and God ſpare not his church in this world, thoſe who perſecuted the faithful, and oppoſed the Goſpel, would not eſcape the righteous judgment of God.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter contains ſeveral very uſeful inſtructions. I. That the conſideration of what *Chriſt* ſuffered, engages us very ſtrongly to renounce ſin, and the luſts of the fleſh, and particularly to avoid impurity and intemperance. II. That thoſe who profeſs to fear God, ought not to think it ſtrange if they are blamed by worldly men for not living like them, not to be moved either by their example or contempt. III. The third leſſon is, always to ſet before our eyes the end of all things, and the laſt coming of our Lord, to be prepared for it by a ſober life, by diligence in prayer, and by the practice of the duties of charity. IV. That we ought every one of us to make uſe of the different talents we have received from God, whether they be temporal or ſpiritual, for his glory, and for the advantage of our neighbour; and that this is what thoſe eſpecially, if they have any extraordinary talents, or any office in the church, are

particularly

particularly obliged to. Laſtly, St. *Peter* teaches us that it is both honourable and joyous to ſuffer as a Chriſtian; and that if the faithful and righteous are expoſed to ſo many evils, unbelievers and wicked men may expect much more terrible puniſhments. This conſideration is very proper to encourage Chriſtians to endure patiently, and even with gladneſs, all the evils which the profeſſion of the Goſpel brings upon them from the wicked; and to inſpire us all with a dread of God's judgments, and excite us more and more to a life of holineſs.

CHAP. V.

ST. *Peter* exhorts in this chapter, I. Paſtors to diſcharge their duty. II. Young people to be in ſubmiſſion to their paſtors and teachers, and to be humble. III. All Chriſtians in general to live in ſobriety and watchfulneſs, and to reſiſt the temptations of the devil. IV. He concludes his Epiſtle with wiſhes and ſalutations.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter deſcribes, I. The duty of paſtors, and the glorious reward they will receive from the Lord *Jeſus*, if they faithfully diſcharge the duties of their miniſtry. What St. *Peter* ſays on this ſubject, ought to engage thoſe who are in that office to ſerve God with integrity, to feed the flock of the Lord, to watch carefully over the ſheep with which they are intruſted, and to exerciſe their charge, not by conſtraint, nor with a view of pride or intereſt, but with affection, and willingly, and in ſuch a manner as to become examples to them of humility, and all kinds of virtue. II. St. *Peter* teaches young people, that ſubmiſſion to their paſtors belongs particularly to their age and condition; and all Chriſtians in general are to remember, that humility is one of the principal virtues in Chriſtianity, ſince *God reſiſteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.* III. We are to remark,

that our condition in this world expoſes us to the temptations of the devil, and to various dangers; from which we cannot be ſecured without ſobriety, vigilance, and continuing ſtedfaſt in the faith. Laſtly, The prayer with which St. *Peter* concludes this chapter, teaches us, that the Chriſtian profeſſion, and the hopes of eternal glory, oblige us to aſpire more and more after perfection; and that the way to attain it, is to truſt in God, and to implore the continual help of his grace; beſeeching *the God of peace, who has called us to his eternal glory by Chriſt Jeſus, to make us perfect, to eſtabliſh, ſtrengthen, and ſettle us; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever.* Amen.

The End of the Firſt EPISTLE *of St.* PETER.

THE

THE

SECOND EPISTLE GENERAL

OF

ST. PETER.

ARGUMENT.

It appears from this very Epiſtle that St. Peter *wrote it a little before his death, about the year of* Chriſt *ſixty-ſix, to confirm Chriſtians in the faith, in ſound doctrine, and the practice of good works; and to prevent their being led away by falſe teachers, who, to the profeſſion of Chriſtianity, joined a carnal life; and to put them upon their guard againſt certain profane perſons, that called in queſtion the ſecond coming of* Chriſt. *This Epiſtle, as well as the foregoing, bears very evident marks of its divine authority, and is writ with great ſtrength and majeſty.*

CHAP. I.

I. ST. *Peter* in this chapter ſhews, that God having given us all that is neceſſary to live in holineſs, we ought to join to our faith the practice of Chriſtian virtues, and that this is the only means to enter into the kingdom of God. II. He next repreſents to the faithful, that he exhorted them after this manner, becauſe he foreſaw that he ſhould be ſoon taken away

from them by death. III. And laſtly, He proves the truth of the Goſpel by the transfiguration of *Jeſus Chriſt*, and by the prophecies of the Old Teſtament.

REFLECTIONS *after reading the chapter.*

AT the beginning of this Epiſtle we are taught, I. That God in his goodneſs and power, and by the glorious promiſes he has given us in the Goſpel, has afforded us every thing neceſſary to produce in us a ſpiritual and holy life, and make us partakers of the divine nature. St. *Peter* could not more fully prove, that the end and deſign of God's giving us his grace, is to make us live a godly life; that, with the aſſiſtance of God's grace, we may recover from the corruptions of the world, and even attain to a great degree of perfection; that no neceſſary aſſiſtance is wanting to enable us to do it; and that, therefore, we are inexcuſable if we do not. II. St. *Peter* ſets down particularly what our duty is in this reſpect, exhorting us to add to our faith prudence, temperance, patience, holineſs, brotherly love, and charity; and to endeavour to make our calling and election ſure; and ſhews the abſolute neceſſity of all theſe duties, becauſe we cannot any other way ſecure an entrance into the kingdom of God: but he tells us farther, that thoſe who neglect theſe duties are blind, and will periſh in their ſins. III. The care St. *Peter* took to warn Chriſtians before his death, ſhews, that they who can be uſeful to their neighbours, ought to endeavour it whilſt they are in this world, and to double their zeal as their end draws nigh. The miniſters of the Goſpel ought particularly to dedicate their whole lives to this great end. IV. We ſee that St. *Peter* proves the truth and divinity of the Chriſtian doctrine, by the teſtimony which he and his companions had rendered, of that which happened to our Lord when he was transfigured, and by the prophecies of the Old Teſtament. This obliges us ſeriouſly to attend to theſe proofs, and carefully to read and meditate on the Goſpel,

Goſpel, and writings of the apoſtles and prophets. As to the prophecies, we ſhould conſider particularly, that they were formerly ſomewhat obſcure, but that at preſent they are very clear, and very proper to confirm us in the faith, and in our obedience to the doctrine and precepts of *Jeſus Chriſt* our Saviour.

CHAP. II.

I. THE apoſtle foretels, that falſe teachers ſhould ariſe, who would cauſe diviſions, and introduce pernicious doctrines; and he ſhews, by the puniſhment of the wicked angels, by the flood, and by the deſtruction of *Sodom* and *Gomorrah*, that theſe deceivers, and thoſe who followed them, ſhould not remain unpuniſhed. II. In the next place, he deſcribes theſe falſe teachers as ſenſual perſons, and ſuch as ſpeak evil of dignities; as unclean, addicted to covetouſneſs; full of pride, vain and deceitful in their words; ſeducing the ſimple by their falſe promiſes of liberty; and he ſhews, that they involved in the greateſt miſeries all thoſe that hearkened to them; and who, after they had known the truth, ſuffered themſelves to be led away by their diſcourſes.

REFLECTIONS.

WE may learn from hence, I. That there were in all times, and always will be, falſe teachers, who endeavour to introduce dangerous doctrines, and to form ſects and parties in the church. It was neceſſary this prediction ſhould be often repeated by the apoſtles, that in after-ages we might not be ſurpriſed at the appearance of theſe ſeducers, and might take care not to fall into the ſnares they ſhould lay for us. II. This chapter ſhews us, that God has in all ages given proofs of his juſtice, as appears more particularly in the puniſhment of the rebellious angels; in the flood; and in the deſtruction of *Sodom* and the neighbouring cities. Theſe examples teach us, as the apoſtle ſays, that *the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation*,

temptation, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished: But chiefly, that those who walk after the flesh, in the lust of uncleanness, shall receive the punishment they deserve; as is proved particularly by the destruction of the old world, and the burning of *Sodom* and *Gomorrah*. III. We are to give a particular attention to the characters by which the apostle represents these false teachers, telling us, that they were proud enemies to government, entertaining such notions of independence as tended to sedition; that they were covetous, designing men; inconstant, boasters; and, above all, addicted to sensual pleasures. This shews us, that we ought to shun those in whom we find these characters, as dangerous persons, and that we ought chiefly to abominate all such doctrines as have a tendency to these sins, and which soothe us in our vices. By which we may likewise perceive, that it is the corruption of the heart, and of the passions, which commonly engage men in error. IV. Those to whom God has given knowledge and grace, ought to improve what they learn in this chapter, namely, that when having received these advantages, they suffer themselves to be overcome by the pollutions of the world, their last condition will be worse than the first; and that it were better for them never to have known the way of righteousness, than to turn aside from it after they have known it. This is a most necessary piece of advice, and such as ought to induce even good people to a fear, attended with watchfulness and precaution, and to exert continually their utmost endeavours to keep themselves, and to improve in the way of godliness.

CHAP. III.

I. THE Apostle foretels, that there should be in the church profane men; who would call in question the second coming of *Christ*. To refute these, he declares, that as the world was formerly destroyed by the waters of the flood, it would likewise one day perish by

by fire; and that, if the coming of *Chriſt* were retarded, it was becauſe God would give men time to repent. II. He ſhews, that the belief and expectation of the end of all things, and the hopes of being partakers of the world to come, oblige us to unwearied endeavours after holineſs and perfection.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter treats of the laſt coming of *Chriſt*, and of the end of the world; and of the effect which this doctrine ought to produce in us. Upon the former of theſe articles we ought to conſider theſe four things: I. That ſince it has been foretold, that there would be in the laſt times ſcoffers, who would deny the moſt certain and moſt important truths of religion, we ought not to be ſurpriſed if there be ſome in our times; but wherever we find them, to ſhun them as the moſt dangerous and worſt of men. II. That it is likewiſe moſt certain, that the world muſt have an end, and that *Jeſus Chriſt* ſhall come at the laſt day to judge the world. This we have a ſure proof of in the flood; which is a fact undeniable, and univerſally acknowledged. III. That if God delays the puniſhment of the ungodly, and the laſt judgment, it is owing to his goodneſs towards men, and that he may allow them time to repent, which ſhould excite us to make a right uſe of the forbearance and patience of the Lord. IV. St. *Peter* teaches us, that as the world was formerly deſtroyed by water, it will be conſumed at the laſt day by fire; and the deſcription which is here made of the end of the world, ſhews us what will be the majeſty and terror of the laſt appearance of the Son of God. As for the effect which this doctrine ſhould produce, the apoſtle tells us, that ſince we know that this world is to be deſtroyed, and that there will be new heavens, and a new earth, in which righteouſneſs will dwell, we cannot apply ourſelves with too great earneſtneſs to a holy life, and works of piety, ſo as not to be ſurpriſed by that day, and to be then found by the Lord with-

without ſpot or blemiſh. This conſequence, which St. *Peter* draws from the end of the world, ſhould convince us, that nothing is of more uſe to animate us to a holy and Chriſtian life, than continually meditating upon the end of all things, and the univerſal judgment. Let us therefore never forget theſe inſtructions; and *ſeeing we know theſe things before, let us beware leſt we alſo be led away with the error of the wicked; but let us grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt: To whom be glory both now and for ever.* Amen.

The End of the Second Epiſtle of St. PETER.

THE

THE

FIRST EPISTLE GENERAL

OF

ST. JOHN.

ARGUMENT.

The deſign of St. John *in this Epiſtle, is to ſecure Chriſtians from being ſeduced by certain heretics, who denied that Chriſt was come in the fleſh, and that he was the Son of God; and who lived in licentiouſneſs. Againſt theſe St.* John *eſtabliſhes, in this Epiſtle, the truth of the Goſpel, and the neceſſity of believing in* Jeſus Chriſt; *of obeying him, and eſpecially living in charity.*

CHAP. I.

I. ST. *John*, to prove that the doctrine which he and the other Apoſtles preached was the only true one, tells us, that neither he himſelf nor his colleagues had taught any thing concerning the Son of God, but what they had ſeen and heard themſelves, having lived with *Jeſus Chriſt*; which the falſe teachers could not ſay. II. In oppoſition to theſe heretics, he ſhews in the next place, that the ſum and ſubſtance of

the doctrine which he preached was, that as God is light and holineſs itſelf, none but thoſe who walk in holineſs, who ſincerely confeſs their ſins and forſake them, have any communion with God, and with *Chriſt* his Son.

REFLECTIONS *after reading the chapter.*

I. THE firſt inſtruction we meet with in this chapter, relates to the truth of the Goſpel, which appears by the certainty of the teſtimony of the apoſtles, who preached nothing but what they had ſeen and heard, and their hands had handled. II. We obſerve here, that the deſign of the Chriſtian Religion is, to render men like God by holineſs. This truth St. *John* declares moſt expreſsly, at the very beginning of his Epiſtle, when he tells us, that thoſe who boaſt of being in communion with God and *Jeſus Chriſt*, and yet remain in ſin, are liars, and do not act with ſincerity; and that there are none but thoſe who, to ſound faith add holineſs of life, that are partakers of ſalvation. III. He teaches, that as all men were ſinners, and God had ſent his Son to ſave them, there was no other means to partake of the mercy of God, and of the efficacy of the blood of *Jeſus Chriſt*, than by ſincerely confeſſing and forſaking their ſins.

CHAP. II.

THE apoſtle confirms in this chapter what he had advanced in the foregoing, that in order to have communion with God, we muſt believe in *Jeſus Chriſt*, and live a holy life. To this end he ſhews, I. That *Chriſt* has atoned for the ſins of the whole world; but that none but ſuch as keep his commandments, and live as he lived, have any ſhare in that atonement. II. That the chief commandment of our Lord is, to love one another; and that thoſe who do not love their neighbour, are in darkneſs, and in death. III. He exhorts Chriſtians of all ages, but particularly young people, not to love the world; becauſe the love of the world was incon-

inconſiſtent with the love of God, and his Son *Jeſus Chriſt*. IV. He adviſes the faithful not to ſuffer themſelves to be ſeduced by impoſtors and antichriſts, who denied that *Jeſus* was the *Chriſt*, and the Son of God; and that they ſhould ſtedfaſtly retain the pure doctrine, and the truth which was taught them from the beginning.

REFLECTIONS.

ST. *John* teaches us here, I. That our Lord has atoned for the ſins of all mankind, and intercedes for us with God. This is a doctrine full of comfort for ſinners; but it muſt be remembered, that the apoſtle confines the benefit of *Chriſt*'s death and interceſſion to thoſe that believe in him, and love him, and keep his commandments; and that he excludes thoſe who obey him not, as hypocrites and liars. II. We are here taught, that the chief duty of Chriſtians is to imitate their Saviour, and to live as he lived. III. That among the commandments of *Chriſt*, that which has the firſt place, and to which all the reſt may be reduced, is the love of our neighbour; that they in whom this love is found, are in the light, and there is no occaſion of ſtumbling in them; but that thoſe who do not love their brother are in darkneſs, and in a ſtate of condemnation. IV. The apoſtle teaches us, that the doctrine of *Chriſt* engages Chriſtians of all ages, and all conditions, to ſtrengthen themſelves more and more in the love of God, and of *Jeſus Chriſt*: That old men in their advanced age are not without motives to the diſcharge of this duty; and that in this young men ſhould employ the ſtrength and vigour of their youth. He exhorts young men in particular to renounce the love of the world; aſſuring them, that the love of riches, of pleaſures, and of glory, is by no means conſiſtent with the love of God. This is what young people ought moſt ſeriouſly to conſider, in order to avoid the temptations to which their age expoſes them; remembering for this purpoſe, that *the world*

world paſſeth away, and the luſts thereof; but he that doth the will of God abideth for ever. V. The warning St. *John* gives in this chapter to beware of falſe teachers, that did not acknowledge *Jeſus* for the Son of God, and for the Meſſiah, teaches us, that we ought never to hearken to thoſe who ſpread doctrines contrary to the Goſpel; that faith in *Jeſus Chriſt* is abſolutely neceſſary to ſalvation; and that we are not in danger of falling into error, if we have the unction of the Holy Spirit; if we inviolably adhere to the doctrine taught from the beginning by *Chriſt*, and by the apoſtles, and which is contained in the Goſpel; But St. *John* informs us likewiſe at the ſame time, that faith in *Chriſt* engages us to live righteouſly and holily, that when he ſhall appear we may have entire confidence, and not be confounded by his preſence at his coming.

CHAP. III.

IN this chapter St. *John* ſpeaks, I. Of the love which God has ſhewn us in adopting us for his children, and of the glory he has reſerved for us. He ſays, II. That the hope of this glory obliges us to purify ourſelves; and that the end of *Chriſt*'s coming was to withdraw men from ſin, and to render them righteous and holy. III. He treats particularly about the love of our neighbour; he ſhews how neceſſary that virtue is, and its nature and effects; and he adds, that the ſureſt way to obtain peace of conſcience, and to be filled with confidence before God, is to love one another ſincerely.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter, which is one of the moſt inſtructive in the New Teſtament, engages us, I. To celebrate the love of God our father, who has adopted us for his children; and to conſider well the advantages of our adoption, and the glory with which the children of God will be crowned at the coming of our Lord and Saviour

Saviour *Jeſus Chriſt*. II. The apoſtle teaches us, that thoſe who have ſuch glorious hopes muſt purify themſelves; that the deſign of *Chriſt*'s coming into the world was to deſtroy ſin; that he that is a child of God does not ſin, that is, does not live in a habit of ſin, nor give himſelf up to ſin; but that he who ſins is a child of the devil; and that this is a ſure mark to diſtinguiſh the children of God from the children of the devil. This St. *John* declares in the moſt expreſs and formal manner, warning us very ſeriouſly not to ſuffer ourſelves to be deceived in this point. III. Of all the duties of Chriſtianity, St. *John* chiefly inſiſts on charity; telling us, that the love of our neighbour is the true character of Chriſtians, and that thoſe in whom this love is not found, and who hate their brother, are murderers like *Cain*, and remain in condemnation and death. IV. St. *John* inſtructs us concerning the nature and effects of true charity; informing us, that it ought not only to conſiſt in words, but that it ſhould be ſincere and hearty, manifeſting itſelf by its effects, and inclining us to aſſiſt our brethren, and, if it were neceſſary, even to lay down our lives for them, as *Chriſt* did for us. Laſtly, The apoſtle teaches us, that by diſcharging theſe duties we ſhall be able to diſcover whether we are in the truth and in the love of God; and that this is the way to have peace of conſcience, and a firm aſſurance of obtaining from him whatſoever we aſk of him.

CHAP. IV.

ST. *John* warns Chriſtians not to believe every doctrine, but to try them whether they proceed from God or not; and to aſſiſt them in the diſcovery, he gives them theſe two rules; I. Firſt, That thoſe who did not confeſs that *Jeſus Chriſt* was come in the fleſh, and was the Meſſiah, ought to be rejected as people animated with the ſpirit of the world, and of error, and not with the ſpirit of truth. II. The ſecond is, That religion conſiſts in charity, which the apoſtle proves,

proves, by repreſenting the greatneſs of the love which God has ſhewn in giving us his Son; from whence he concludes, that thoſe who are not animated by a ſpirit of charity do not love God, nor belong to him, and conſequently ought not to be heard.

REFLECTIONS.

CHRISTIANS may learn from hence, I. Not to receive all kind of doctrines, ſince there have always been impoſtors in the world; but to examine them, to know whether they come from God or not. This every Chriſtian has a right to do, and it is his duty not to neglect it. II. That it is one of the fundamental truths of religion to believe, that *Jeſus* is the *Chriſt*, and the Son of God, and that he was made man for our ſalvation. III. That charity is the ſum and eſſence of religion, and the diſtinguiſhing badge of Chriſtianity. This St. *John* repeats ſeveral times, and eſtabliſhes it upon this principle, that God is love itſelf, and has manifeſted his love to men by ſending his Son to give them life. By all this we may diſcover, that the love of our neighbour is a duty abſolutely neceſſary; and that thoſe who are ſtrangers to it do not know God as they ought to know him, nor do any way belong to him. This St. *John* declares in ſeveral places, and particularly in theſe words: *He that ſays he loves God, and hateth his brother, is a liar.* This likewiſe ſhews us, that in order to produce in us this love, we ſhould meditate upon the nature and perfections of God, who is all love; and upon that great goodneſs he has manifeſted to us, in giving us his Son to make an atonement for our ſins. Since God has thus firſt loved us, we ought to love him moſt fervently, and to love one another; and by being more and more confirmed in the love of God and of our neighbour, we ſhall bear the image of our heavenly Father, enjoy great peace and tranquillity of mind, and have confidence at the day of judgment, and at the coming of our Lord *Jeſus Chriſt*.

CHAP.

CHAP. V.

I. ST. *John* continues to ſhew, that the true children of God are known by the ſoundneſs of their faith, by their obedience to his commandments, and by charity. II. He teaches that the truth of the Goſpel was confirmed from heaven, by the teſtimony of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghoſt; and upon earth, by the ſpirit, by water, and by blood. From whence he concludes, that the doctrine of the Goſpel, and the promiſes of eternal life, which are made us in *Jeſus Chriſt*, ought to be received with a full aſſurance of faith. III. St. *John* ſays, that thoſe who had ſuch faith were ſure of obtaining from God all they ſhould aſk of him according to his will, even the health and life of their brethren; unleſs thoſe for whom they prayed had committed certain ſins which God thought fit to puniſh by a temporal death. IV. The apoſtle finiſhes this Epiſtle by exhorting the faithful to keep themſelves pure, to continue ſtedfaſt in the faith, and to avoid idolatry, and every thing that tended to draw them into it.

REFLECTIONS.

FROM this chapter, as well as the foregoing, we may gather, I. That none are the true children of God but thoſe who believe in his Son, who ſincerely love their neighbour, and who keep his commandments. II. That the keeping of God's commandments is not a difficult or painful thing; but that, on the contrary, by the love of God, and by faith, we may eaſily overcome the world and temptations. III. That ſince the divinity of the Goſpel has been confirmed in ſo authentic a manner, in heaven and upon earth, we ſhall remain without excuſe if we do not receive its doctrine as divine and heavenly, and if we do not obſerve the duties it preſcribes. IV. That thoſe who do the will of God are ſure to be heard by him; and that their

their prayers have great efficacy, unleſs they ſhould aſk certain temporal bleſſings, which he does not think fit to grant them. This is a very valuable bleſſing, which ought moſt powerfully to excite us to obey and love God. V. St. *John* tells us, that thoſe who are children of God do not ſin; that is, do not ſin as the wicked do; that ſin does not reign in them; and he adds, that the wicked one has no power over them; and that they keep themſelves pure, knowing that they belong to God, while the reſt of the world lieth in ſin and corruption. This is the duty and character of Chriſtians, and of all the true ſons of God; and this too is the only means to keep up a ſaving communion with God our Father, and his Son *Jeſus Chriſt*, who is the true God, and life eternal; to whom be glory for ever. *Amen.*

The End of the Firſt Epiſtle of St. JOHN.

THE

THE

SECOND EPISTLE

OF

ST. JOHN.

ARGUMENT.

St. John *writes this Epiſtle to a Chriſtian lady, and to the church which was in her houſe. He exhorts her to perſevere in the truth, and in charity; to ſhun falſe teachers, and to have no dealings with them.*

REFLECTIONS.

WE may obſerve in this Epiſtle for our inſtruction, I. The zeal and piety of that lady to whom St. *John* writes. This is an example which chiefly concerns Chriſtian women, and which teaches them to adhere to godlineſs, and to cauſe it to reign in their families, as this lady did, whom St. *John* ſo much commends. II. We ſee here, that all thoſe who know the truth, and love it ſincerely, do alſo love one another heartily, and join, to the knowledge of the truth, obedience to the commandments of God, and the

practice of charity. III. St. *John* teaches us, that it is not enough to have begun well, and entered into the way of godlineſs; but that we muſt perſevere to the end, ſo as not to loſe the fruits of what we have done, but be qualified to receive a full reward. IV. The laſt inſtruction ſhews what we are to do with reſpect to thoſe that teach falſe doctrines, and who have libertine ſentiments, namely, not to receive them as brethren, but to avoid their company, and any correſpondence with them, and to ſeparate ourſelves from them, and from all others, who do not live according to the precepts of the Goſpel.

The End of the Second Epiſtle of St. John.

THE

THE

THIRD EPISTLE

OF

ST. JOHN.

ARGUMENT.

This Epiſtle is directed to a Chriſtian named Gaius. *St.* John *praiſes the zeal which this faithful ſervant of God had for the truth, and his great charity towards the brethren. He recommends to him ſome perſons who ſtood in need of aſſiſtance. He complains of a certain man named* Diotrephes, *who was probably a biſhop; and gives a good character of* Demetrius.

REFLECTIONS.

IN this Epiſtle we may obſerve, I. The tender love St. *John* had for *Gaius* on account of his piety and charity, and his great joy to ſee him in ſo good a ſtate. This teaches us to love and eſteem thoſe eſpecially who fear God; and that the miniſters of the Lord do never conceive more ſincere pleaſure, nor enjoy greater comfort, than when they know that thoſe whom they look upon as their children do walk

in paths of truth and holineſs. II. The example of *Gaius*, who received believers and ſtrangers with ſo much heartineſs, and whoſe charity had ſo good a ſavour in the church, ſhould ſtir us up to do good to all our brethren, and particularly ſuch as are perſecuted for the Goſpel, and are forced to flee from one city to another. III. What he ſays here of *Diotrephes*, who aſpired at being the chief, and even oppoſed St. *John* himſelf, ſhews, that perſons who refuſe to ſubmit to order, and eſpecially ambitious miniſters, that lord it over others, occaſion great evils in the church. But, on the contrary, it is a great happineſs when the miniſters are humble and pious, and ſuch as every body will ſpeak well of, as was *Demetrius*. IV. St. *John* gives us a very important piece of advice in theſe words, *Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God, but he that doeth evil hath not ſeen God.* This is what diſtinguiſhes true Chriſtians from impoſtors and deceivers, and it is by this likewiſe that we ſhould examine ourſelves, and regulate our behaviour.

The End of the Third Epiſtle of St. JOHN.

THE

THE

EPISTLE GENERAL

OF

ST. JUDE.

ARGUMENT.

I. *This Epiſtle, as well as the Second Epiſtle of St.* Peter, *which it is a kind of abridgment of, was writ againſt certain deceivers and prophane perſons that had crept into the church, who taught damnable doctrines, and lived moſt licentious and irregular lives.* II. *The apoſtle St.* Jude *proves, by many examples, that God would not ſpare them. He gives a deſcription of their ſentiments and behaviour, ſaying, they were carnal men, and addicted to impurity, and every thing that was infamous; enemies of government and order, diſobedient, quarrelſome, proud, boaſters, and ſelf-intereſted* III. *To preſerve the believers from being ſeduced by theſe profane perſons, he puts them in mind of what the apoſtles had foretold concerning them, and exhorts them to continue in the love of God through faith and prayer; to avoid every thing that might corrupt them; and to endeavour to deliver from error thoſe that were engaged therein; making uſe of meekneſs towards ſome, and of wholeſome ſeverity towards others.*

REFLEC-

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE caution which St. *Jude* gave formerly againſt the profane perſons of his age, is not leſs neceſſary at preſent, ſince there are ſuch a great number of libertines, who turn religion and the grace of God into diſſoluteneſs and impiety; wherefore every one ought to be upon his guard againſt ſuch perſons. II. From the deſcription which St. *Jude* gives of thoſe profane perſons, we learn, that it is a ſure mark of irreligion and impiety, when men who call themſelves Chriſtians live in impurity and uncleanneſs, refuſe to be in ſubjection to the higher powers, are proud and vain, and fond of independence, and make religion ſubſervient to their intereſt. The apoſtle directs us not only to guard againſt the opinions and ſentiments of theſe men, but even to avoid all intercourſe with them. III. The example of the puniſhment which God formerly inflicted upon the rebellious angels, and upon the inhabitants of *Sodom* and *Gomorrah*, who had given themſelves up to the moſt infamous pollutions; and the ancient prophecy of *Enoch*, which St. *Jude* mentions, do all prove, that ſuch libertines and impious perſons ſhall not eſcape the judgment of God, and that he will take ſevere vengeance on them; and that if they ſhould eſcape in this life, they will not be ſecure from his vengeance in the next. IV. St. *Jude* teaches us, that the way to preſerve ourſelves from being ſeduced by theſe profane perſons, is to remember that *Chriſt* and the apoſtles have warned us that there would be many ſuch in the laſt times; to read and meditate on the ſacred writings; and to our reading and meditation to join prayer and watchfulneſs, as St. *Jude* exhorts us in theſe admirable words: *But ye beloved, building up yourſelves on your moſt holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghoſt, keep yourſelves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt unto*

unto eternal life. Laſtly, This apoſtle informs us, that it is not ſufficient to ſecure ourſelves from the errors of the wicked, but that charity requires, that we ſhould endeavour to deliver others who are engaged in it; making uſe, to that end, either of gentleneſs or ſeverity, and of all other methods that prudence and zeal may ſuggeſt to us.

The End of the Epiſtle of St. JUDE.

THE

REVELATION

OF

ST. JOHN THE DIVINE.

ARGUMENT.

This Book is called the Apocalypſe, or Revelation, becauſe it contains the revelation which God made to St. John *in the iſle of* Patmos, *where he was baniſhed by the emperor* Domitian. *The three firſt chapters relate to the principal churches that were then in* Aſia Minor; *and the following ſhew what was to happen in the church to the end of the world. In this Book there are ſome places that are pretty clear; but there are likewiſe viſions and prophecies which are obſcure and differently explained; on which we ſhall make no particular reflections.*

CHAP. I.

I. IN this chapter St. *John* ſpeaks of the uſefulneſs of the prophecies contained in this book, wiſhes grace and peace to the ſeven churches of *Aſia*, and foretels the coming of *Jeſus Chriſt*. II. In the next place,

place, he relates a glorious viſion, in which our Lord appeared to him, and commanded him to write, in his name, to the ſeven churches of *Aſia*.

REFLECTIONS *after reading the chapter.*

I. THE beginning of this chapter teaches us, that the reading and meditating upon this book of the Revelation, is very profitable. Accordingly, we ought to make a good uſe of the things which it contains; and although we find in this book ſome prophecies that are hard to be underſtood, there are other paſſages in it whoſe ſenſe is clear and evident, and which are very inſtructive. II. The prayers and thankſgivings with which St. *John* begins this book, expreſs the ſentiments of all true believers; who ought to beg the grace and peace of God for themſelves and for all the churches, and to render fervent and continual thanks *unto him that loved us, and waſhed us from our ſins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and prieſts unto God and his father.* III. St. *John*'s prediction of the coming of *Chriſt*, ſhews, that the deſign of this book of the Revelation, is to warn men of that coming, which muſt be ſo comfortable to believers, and ſo dreadful to the wicked; and that we ought continually to meditate on this glorious coming of our Saviour. IV. In this magnificent appearance of our Lord, which is here related, we may obſerve chiefly, the majeſty of *Jeſus Chriſt*, and the care he takes of his church. This is ſignified in the deſcription here made of our Lord's glorious appearance to St. *John*, and of the ſeven candleſticks of gold, in the midſt of which *Chriſt* ſtood, which repreſented the ſeven churches of *Aſia*; and the ſeven ſtars, which he held in his right hand, ſignified the angels, that is, the biſhops and paſtors of thoſe churches. This viſion, and our Lord's explanation of it to St. *John*, teaches us, that *Chriſt* is in the midſt of his church; that he governs it; that he ſees every thing that paſſes therein; and that its paſtors are appointed

appointed by his authority. This ought to be a great inducement, not only to paſtors, but to all Chriſtians, to rely upon *Chriſt*, to ſerve him faithfully; as being always under his eye, who is the king, and ſupreme paſtor of the church, and judge of all men.

CHAP. II. 1—11.

THIS part of the ſecond chapter of the Revelation contains two epiſtles which St. *John* wrote by the order of *Jeſus Chriſt*. I. The firſt is directed to the angel, that is to ſay, to the biſhop of the church of *Epheſus*, and to all his flock. Our Lord praiſes the faith of that church; but reproaches them for their growing cold, and abating of their firſt love, and threatens to take away their candleſtick, that is, to deprive them of the preaching of the Goſpel. II. The ſecond letter is directed to the church of *Smyrna*. Our Lord commends her alſo, but foretels that ſhe ſhould be perſecuted, and exhorts her to perſeverance.

REFLECTIONS.

ON the epiſtles contained in this and the following chapter, we muſt firſt make theſe four reflections: I. That they all begin with theſe words, *I know thy works;* which teaches us, that the ſtate of every church is perfectly known to *Chriſt*, and that he ſees all the good and evil that is in it. II. That *Chriſt* repeats in all the epiſtles the following words: *He that hath an ear, let him hear what the ſpirit ſaith unto the churches.* This warning denotes the importance of the things which Saint *John* wrote in theſe epiſtles, by the order of our Lord, and obliges us very ſeriouſly to attend to them. III. That at the end of each epiſtle, our Lord makes glorious promiſes to thoſe that *overcome*, that is to ſay, to thoſe that conquer temptations, and perſevere to the end in faith and obedience. Theſe promiſes are conveyed in figurative expreſſions, which denote the valuable bleſſings which our Lord beſtows on his elect in this life,

life, and the happineſs he reſerves for them in heaven. Laſtly, That the threatenings which *Chriſt* denounces in theſe epiſtles againſt the churches of *Aſia Minor*, were executed afterwards, as we ſee even at this day, in the ſad condition to which thoſe churches, that were formerly ſo flouriſhing, are now reduced. In the two epiſtles addreſſed to the church of *Epheſus*, and of *Smyrna*, we may obſerve, I. That *Chriſt* commends thoſe two churches for not ſuffering the wicked to remain among them; by which we learn, that our Lord would not have falſe teachers ſuffered to continue in the communion of the church, any more than the vicious and ſenſual, ſuch as were the *Nicolaitans*, mentioned in the epiſtle to the church of *Epheſus*, who were guilty of all uncleanneſs. II. *Chriſt*'s reproaches of the church of *Epheſus* for having forſaken her firſt love, and threatening to remove her candleſtick if ſhe did not repent, ſhews plainly, that God withdraws his protection from churches that grow careleſs and lukewarm, eſpecially in reſpect of charity; and that he ſuffers them to be perſecuted, and even deſtroyed, as it happened ſome time after to the church of *Epheſus*. III. We ſee in the epiſtle to the church of *Smyrna*, that God does ſometimes expoſe Chriſtians to perſecution; but that it ought not to ſhake their conſtancy, ſince he does not abandon them in thoſe trials, and has moreover promiſed to beſtow a crown of life upon thoſe that are faithful unto death.

CHAP. II. 12—29.

WE have, in this part of the ſecond chapter, two epiſtles which *Chriſt* ordered to be wrote, one to the church of *Pergamos*, and the other to the church of *Thyatira*. I. He praiſes the zeal and conſtancy of thoſe of the church of *Pergamos*, and exhorts them not to ſuffer thoſe who retained the doctrine of *Balaam*, and of the *Nicolaitans*: theſe were falſe teachers, that drew away Chriſtians into idolatry and

and impurity, as *Balaam* of old cauſed the *Iſraelites* to fall into the ſame ſins, by the advice he gave to *Balak*, king of *Moab*. II. He gives the ſame advice to the church of *Thyatira*, under the character of *Jezebel*; by whom he underſtands the ſame ſeducers, who were like *Jezebel*, the wife of *Ahab*, and perhaps ſome woman who called herſelf a propheteſs. He threatens them, and thoſe that followed them, with deſtruction; and he exhorts this church to perſevere in the purity of the faith.

REFLECTIONS.

WE may make the four following reflections upon theſe two epiſtles; 1. *Chriſt* praiſes the churches of *Pergamos* and *Thyatira*, for their ſteadineſs under perſecution, which appeared more particularly in the martyrdom of *Antipas*; as alſo for their faith and charity; and takes notice, that their laſt works exceeded their firſt. From hence we may gather, that the glory of any church before God and man, is conſtancy in affliction, perſeverance in faith, and progreſs in piety and good works. II. We ſee, however, that our Lord reproves theſe churches for ſuffering among them falſe prophets, who taught, that it was lawful to eat of things ſacrificed to idols; and who, by their doctrine and example, engaged Chriſtians in impurity, in ſenſuality, and idolatry. Theſe reproaches, which *Chriſt* repeats more than once, ſhew, that we ought not to tolerate in the church ſuch as corrupt the purity of faith and manners by pernicious doctrines, and particularly thoſe that live in impurity, or entice others to it; and, that the churches which ſuffer theſe perſons, and theſe offences, do what is very diſagreeable to *Chriſt*, and draw upon themſelves his indignation and wrath. III. We obſerve, in the epiſtle to the church of *Thyatira*, that God warns the falſe teachers, and thoſe who were joined with them, that he gave them time to repent; but, that if they did not make a good uſe of his forbearance,

he

he was going to viſit them with his judgments: and make them an example. Thus does God deal with the greateſt ſinners: he deſtroys them not till he has firſt threatened them, and bore long with them. IV. Our Lord declares expreſsly here, that he will judge all thoſe who ſuffer themſelves to be led away by error or vice; but that he will glorioufly reward thoſe who remain ſtedfaſt in their obedience to him. This is ſignified in the following words, which are well worthy our conſideration: *All the churches ſhall know, that I am he that ſearcheth the reins and hearts; and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.—He that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations; —Even as I received it of my Father.*

CHAP. III.

THIS chapter contains three epiſtles. I. The epiſtle to the church of *Sardis;* which *Chriſt* reproves ſharply, for having only the name and appearance of Chriſtianity; he exhorts her to repentance; threatens her, and promiſes his favour to thoſe members of that church who had preſerved themſelves undefiled. II. The ſecond epiſtle is to the church of *Philadelphia:* he praiſes her zeal and ſtedfaſtneſs, and makes her particular promiſes of his protection. III. The third is the epiſtle to the church of *Laodicea:* our Lord reproves her for her lukewarmneſs, and for the good opinion ſhe had of herſelf; he exhorts her to get out of this dangerous ſtate, and to improve his corrections, and the invitations of his grace.

REFLECTIONS.

I. IN the church of *Sardis*, which had the appearance of life, but was really dead, and in danger of being overtaken by the judgments of God, we have the picture of ſeveral Chriſtian churches, that have only a ſhew of Chriſtianity, and are likewiſe threatened to be deprived of the love and protection of *Jeſus*

Jeſus Chriſt. But as there were at *Sardis* ſome perſons who had kept themſelves pure, and whom God was pleaſed to ſpare, we ought alſo to believe, that in the greateſt depravity and corruption, there are likewiſe ſome elect, that have kept themſelves undefiled, and whom God will glorioufly diſtinguiſh from wicked and falſe Chriſtians; which is matter of great comfort to all thoſe who love the Lord *Jeſus*, and walk in innocence, in a corrupt and depraved age. II. In the epiſtle to the church of *Philadelphia*, we muſt obſerve, that our Lord praiſes her above all the churches of *Aſia*, promiſing to diſtinguiſh her, and ſecure her from thoſe evils with which the reſt were threatened: which accordingly happened; this church being ſpared when the reſt were deſtroyed, and ſubſiſting even to this day, in a pretty happy condition. This is a very expreſs inſtance of God's favour, and protection of thoſe churches where piety prevails. III. The epiſtle to the church of *Laodicea* teaches us, firſt, that lukewarmneſs in religion is altogether odious to the Lord; that he rejects lukewarm and half Chriſtians, and that we cannot pleaſe him but by a ſincere and fervent zeal. Secondly, That thoſe, who being corrupted and diſſolute, think they are in a good ſtate, are in moſt danger; and that in order to extricate themſelves from it, they ſhould learn to know themſelves well, to have a lively ſenſe of their miſery, and to ſeek for remedy in the grace, and in the Goſpel of our Lord *Jeſus Chriſt*. Thirdly, That God, in order to bring ſinners to this ſtate of repentance, corrects them in his love, and offers them his grace with much patience and goodneſs, as he himſelf expreſſes it in theſe words: *Behold, I ſtand at the door and knock: If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will ſup with him, and he with me.* Let us be ſenſible of theſe invitations, which our gracious Redeemer makes us, and let us receive them with readineſs and gratitude, to the end we may enjoy the bleſſed effects of communion with him.

CHAP

CHAP. IV.

ST. *John* here relates a vision, in which God appeared to him with the tokens of his majesty; and describes the praises with which the saints and angels, here represented by the four and twenty elders, and by the four beasts, or living creatures, celebrate his glory, and give him thanks.

REFLECTIONS.

I. We see in the vision here related, on one hand, a representation of the glory and majesty of God; and on the other, the glory with which the saints and angels, who shall be in the presence of God for ever, will be crowned in heaven; which ought to inspire us with sentiments of reverence and fear for that great God whose glory fills heaven and earth; and with an ardent desire of being one day made partakers of the happiness of the saints in glory. II. As it is said in this chapter, that the saints, who were about the throne of God, did continually praise him day and night, and cast themselves down before him, worshipping him who liveth for ever; we should learn to discharge, even now, this duty, which will then be the everlasting employment of the blessed; namely, to praise God, to render him our homage, and to say always, and with all our heart; *Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.—Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are, and were created.*

CHAP. V.

THIS chapter contains, I. The vision of the book sealed with seven seals, which could not be opened but by the lion of the tribe of *Judah*, and by the Lamb, that is to say, by *Christ*. II. The song of the saints in praise of our Lord.

REFLECTIONS.

IT is not eaſy to determine what is the exact meaning of the viſion contained in this and the following chapters. However, as it is ſaid that nobody could open this book but *Jeſus Chriſt*, this teaches us, that ſince he is the author of theſe prophecies addreſſed to St. *John*, he knows the meaning of them, and will bring about the accompliſhment of them. We are further to obſerve, that the ſaints in glory will be employed in praiſing to all eternity *Jeſus Chriſt* our Redeemer, becauſe he has ſuffered death for us, and redeemed us by his blood. Let us therefore bleſs him from henceforth for ever; let us join our thankſgivings to thoſe of thouſands of angels, and of all the glorified ſpirits; ſaying with them, *Worthy is the Lamb that was ſlain, to receive power, and riches, and wiſdom, and ſtrength, and honour, and glory, and bleſſing.—Bleſſing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that ſitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.* Amen.

CHAP. VI.

THIS chapter is a ſequel of the viſion of the book ſealed with the ſeven ſeals, begun in the foregoing chapter. What is chiefly to be obſerved in it, are the complaints of the ſouls of the martyrs, and the anſwers which they received. Saint *John* deſcribes next, the judgments of God upon the wicked, and their deſpair when God ſhall come to puniſh them.

REFLECTIONS.

THOUGH the meaning of all that is ſaid in this chapter is not perfectly known, we may, nevertheleſs, make theſe two uſeful reflections upon it. I. Firſt with regard to the complaints of thoſe who had ſuffered death for the ſake of *Jeſus Chriſt*, and the anſwer they received. The deſign of this viſion was to comfort the faithful under perſecution, and to teach Chriſtians

Chriſtians not to think it ſtrange if God ſuffered his ſaints to be perſecuted, and their blood to be ſhed, and did not immediately take vengeance on their perſecutors: that God dealt thus with them for wiſe and juſt reaſons; and that he would not fail to avenge them, when the number of their brethren ſhould be accomplished; and that in the mean time, the ſouls of his ſaints are preſerved after death, and enjoy reſt, in expectation of the day of their final deliverance, and of their glory. II. We have in the ſecond part of this chapter an emblem of the end of the world, and of the laſt judgment; and particularly we obſerve in it a lively deſcription of the terror and deſpair with which thoſe who perſecute the faithful, and all the other enemies of God, will be ſeized at that day; which is pathetically deſcribed in theſe words: *They hid themſelves in the dens, and in the rocks of the mountains; and ſaid to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that ſitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: For the great day of his wrath is come; and who ſhall be able to ſtand?* Let theſe expreſſions be often preſent to our minds, that they may keep up in us a religious dread, which will be of great uſe to direct us to avoid that terrible condemnation and deſpair, which will one day be the portion of the wicked, and of all the enemies of our Lord.

CHAP. VII.

I. GOD forbids the angels of his wrath to hurt his elect. II. St. *John* repreſents the happineſs and triumph of the ſaints, and particularly for thoſe that ſhall have ſuffered for the truth.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THOUGH we do not know exactly what the firſt verſes of this chapter relate to, yet we may conclude from the command which was given to the angels, to do no harm to God's elect, who were

marked with his ſeal, that God knows all his faithful ſervants, that they are very dear to him, and that he ſpares them when he viſits the inhabitants of the earth with his judgments; and, above all, that he will ſecure them from his wrath at the laſt day. II. This chapter repreſents, in a very affecting manner, the triumph and glory of the bleſſed, and particularly of the martyrs that ſhall have ſuffered for *Chriſt*; the joy that ſhall be heaped upon them after their labours, and the felicity which God reſerves for them. To this purpoſe, St. *John* tells us, that they ſhall be before the throne of God; and *ſhall ſerve him day and night in his temple; and that he that ſitteth on the throne ſhall dwell among them; that they ſhall hunger no more, neither thirſt any more; —for the Lamb which is in the midſt of the throne ſhall feed them, and ſhall lead them unto fountains of living waters; and that God ſhall wipe away all tears from their eyes.* This ſupreme, this everlaſting felicity, is deſtined not only for martyrs, but is reſerved by God for all thoſe that ſhall keep themſelves pure in this world, and ſhall glorify him by their patience and obedience. Therefore theſe words of St. *John* ought to fill all true Chriſtians with joy and conſolation, raiſe in them an ardent deſire, and a firm expectation of that great glory, and excite them more and more to holineſs and the love of God.

CHAP. XIV.

WHAT we are going to read ſets before us, I. The joy and happineſs of thoſe who have been found faithful to the Lamb, and have kept themſelves pure; and their thankſgivings to God when they ſhall ſee his kingdom perfectly eſtabliſhed, and that of Satan deſtroyed. II. The fall of the myſtical *Babylon*, the puniſhment of thoſe who ſhall be partakers of its errors and its crimes, and the happineſs of thoſe who die in the Lord. III. The viſion of the harveſt and of the vintage.

REFLEC-

REFLECTIONS.

I. WHAT we are to conſider upon this chapter is, that St. *John* ſaid, he ſaw a multitude of the elect of God ſtanding in his preſence, and ſinging a new ſong before his throne; but that none could ſing this ſong, ſave thoſe who had not defiled themſelves, who had followed the Lamb, and in whom no guile was to be found. This teaches us, that the happineſs of the ſaints will be infinité, and that they ſhall be for ever with God; but that none can be admitted to this ſovereign happineſs, and to the communion of the bleſſed, but thoſe who ſhall have kept themſelves pure, and have renounced themſelves, bearing their croſs, and conſtantly following *Chriſt* their Saviour. II. We learn from hence, that the time will come, when the ſpiritual *Babylon* ſhall be deſtroyed, with all thoſe that have been partakers of its idolatries and abominations; and that the puniſhment of the enemies of the church, of apoſtates, and of the wicked in general, will endure for ever and ever. III. The ſpirit of God declares in this chapter, that thoſe who die in the Lord are bleſſed, that they reſt from their labours, and that their works follow them. Theſe aſſurances from the ſpirit of God, of the happy ſtate of believers after death, are a great conſolation to true Chriſtians, and ſhould ſtir us up to a holy life, to the end we may look upon death with confidence, and enjoy that reſt and happineſs which is prepared for thoſe who live and die in the Lord.

CHAP. XX.

THIS chapter has two parts. I. In the former, St. *John* foretels that Satan ſhould be bound, and that *Chriſt* ſhould reign with the ſaints and martyrs a thouſand years. II. In the latter he ſpeaks of the laſt judgment.

REFLECTIONS.

IN this chapter we have two very remarkable prophefies. I. The firſt is, that Satan ſhould be bound for the ſpace of a thouſand years, and that then our Lord would reign glorioufly with the martyrs and ſaints. Now, though we do not well know the whole meaning of this propheſy, yet it ſeems to imply, that there will be a time when the church ſhall enjoy reſt, and ſhall be more pure and holy than it has ever been; and that then the ſaints, and eſpecially the martyrs, ſhall be crowned with great glory. This will come to paſs when all nations are converted, and the kingdom of antichriſt deſtroyed, and the Lord ſhall reign glorioufly in his church; after which Satan ſhall be looſed, and the church ſhall undergo ſome perſecution before the end of the world. II. The ſecond prophecy relates to the laſt judgment. We ſee by what St. *John* ſays of it, the majeſty in which *Chriſt* will appear at that day; the general reſurrection of all men; their ſtanding before the throne of our Lord, who will judge all according to their works, and the iſſue of his judgment, viz. that the wicked ſhall be caſt into the lake of fire, and the righteous made partakers of eternal life. Theſe great truths ought to be always preſent to our minds, and engage us to pray, and to labour continually to improve in piety, that at that day, ſo formidable to the wicked, we may appear before our Lord with confidence, and our names found in the book of life.

CHAP. XXI.

I. ST. *John* here deſcribes the renovation of all things, which will be at the end of the world; the joy prepared for the righteous, and the puniſhments which are reſerved for the wicked. II. He repreſents next, in figurative terms, and by magnificent images,

images, the heavenly *Jeruſalem*, the glory of God's kingdom, and the eternal happineſs of the elect.

REFLECTIONS.

THE deſcription St. *John* gives of the new *Jeruſalem*, teaches us, that at the end of ages all things will be renewed, and that then the kingdom of God, and of his ſaints, will appear in all its glory; and we may judge by the great and ſplendid images, which the ſpirit of God makes uſe of in this chapter, what will be the beauty and magnificence of that glorious habitation to which the ſaints ſhall be admitted; where God will dwell with them, where he will wipe away all tears from their eyes, and where he himſelf will be their glory and their happineſs. This ought to excite in us an ardent deſire to be of the number of thoſe that ſhall be received into the heavenly *Jeruſalem*. And ſince it is written, that no polluted thing ſhall enter therein, and that the portion of unbelievers, of the timorous, of unclean perſons, of murderers, of idolators, of liars, and of other ſinners, ſhall be the lake burning with fire and brimſtone; let us with great zeal endeavour to purify ourſelves, that we may be thought worthy to be admitted into heaven to behold its beauties, and to be put in poſſeſſion of that ſupreme beatitude, which Saint *John* in this chapter gives a deſcription of.

CHAP. XXII.

I. ST. *John* continues to deſcribe the glory of the heavenly *Jeruſalem*. II. The angel confirms to him the truth of the propheſies contained in this book, and commands him to publiſh them. III. *Jeſus Chriſt* declares, he would come quickly to receive the ſaints into his glory, and to puniſh the wicked; and St. *John* expreſſes how ardently the faithful deſire the coming of their Saviour.

REFLEC-

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter which is the laſt of the Revelation, and of all the holy writings, ſets before our eyes, the end and conſummation of all things. We here ſee, how great will be the glory and happineſs which the elect will eternally enjoy in the preſence of God, and of *Jeſus Chriſt* their Saviour: and we alſo learn, that none will be admitted to this happineſs but thoſe who endeavour after it, and who keep the commandments of God; but that the impure, and the wicked in general, ſhall be exculded from it for ever. Thus we ſee what will be one day the lot of good and bad men, and what God propoſes to do at the end of the world. Since he has ſo expreſsly warned us of it, let us be continually meditating upon it; let us remember, that all theſe things are moſt certain, and that God revealed them to St. *John*, and was pleaſed they ſhould be written in this book, for the inſtruction and edification of the church in all ages. II. It is ſaid in this chapter, that when St. *John* was going to throw himſelf at the angel's feet, who talked with him, the angel ſaid unto him, *See thou do it; for I am thy fellow-ſervant, and of thy brethren the prophets; worſhip God.* This proves, that it is unlawful to worſhip any but God, in any manner whatever; and that, therefore, all religious worſhip paid to angels or ſaints muſt be very ſinful. III. It muſt be obſerved, that the angel told St. *John*, that the truths contained in this Book would not produce the ſame effect upon all; that the wicked would corrupt and defile themſelves daily more and more, whilſt the righteous and the ſaints are continually improving in holineſs. This we ſee daily happen; but let us remember, that the Lord has forewarned us of it, and that he will at length come to judge both the righteous and the wicked, as he himſelf has declared at the end of this Book, ſaying, *Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work ſhall be.*

Let

Let us continually pant after his coming, and while we wait for it, let us perſevere in well-doing, and let us ſay with the bride, which is the church, and with all her true children, *Come, Lord Jeſus, come quickly.* Amen.

Here ends the New Teſtament.

God grant us grace to make a good uſe of all that we have here read and heard, to meditate upon it, and to practice it our whole lives, to the glory of God our Father, and to the advancement of our own ſalvation.

The grace of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt be with us all, Amen.

FINIS.

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